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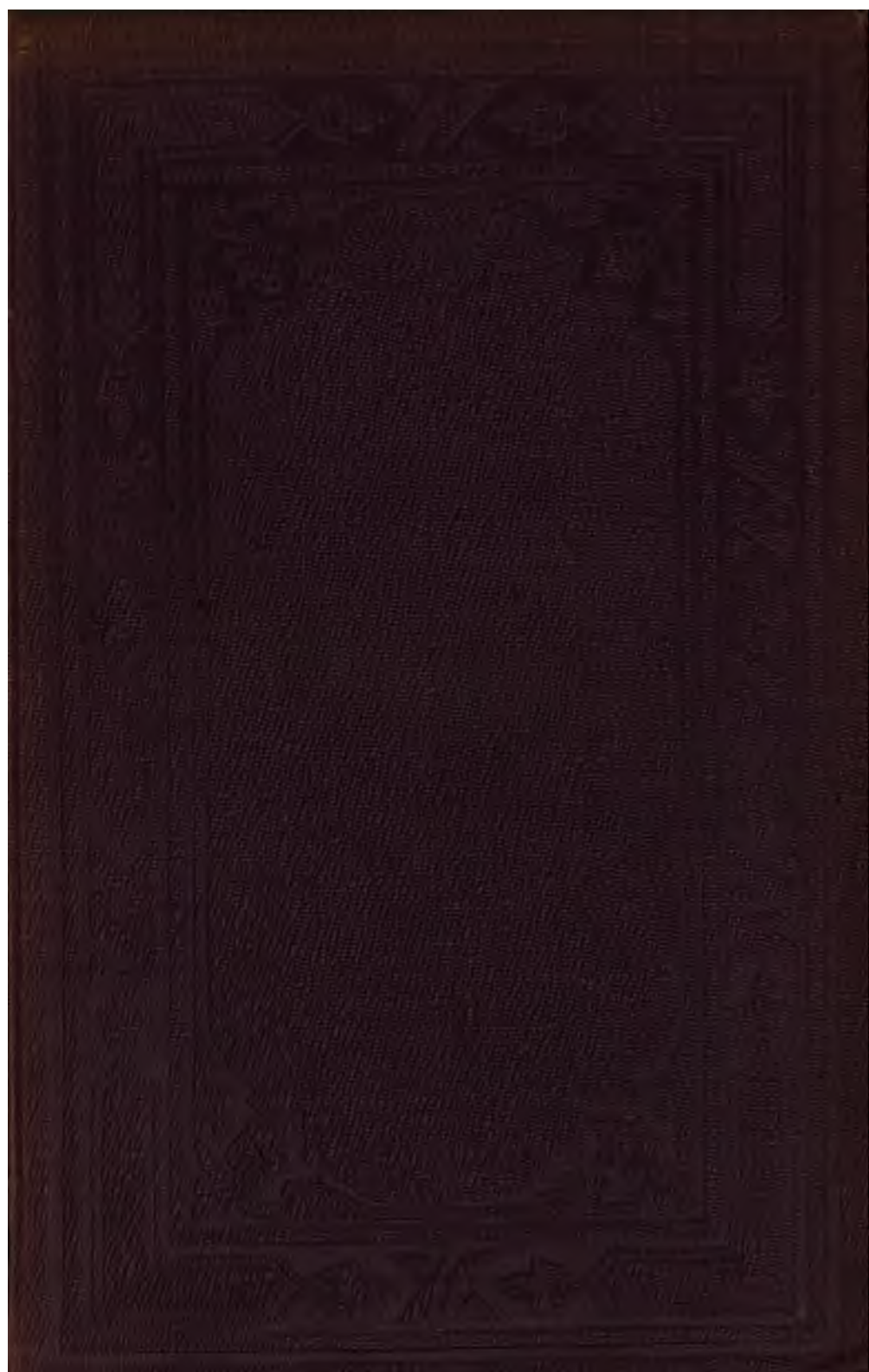
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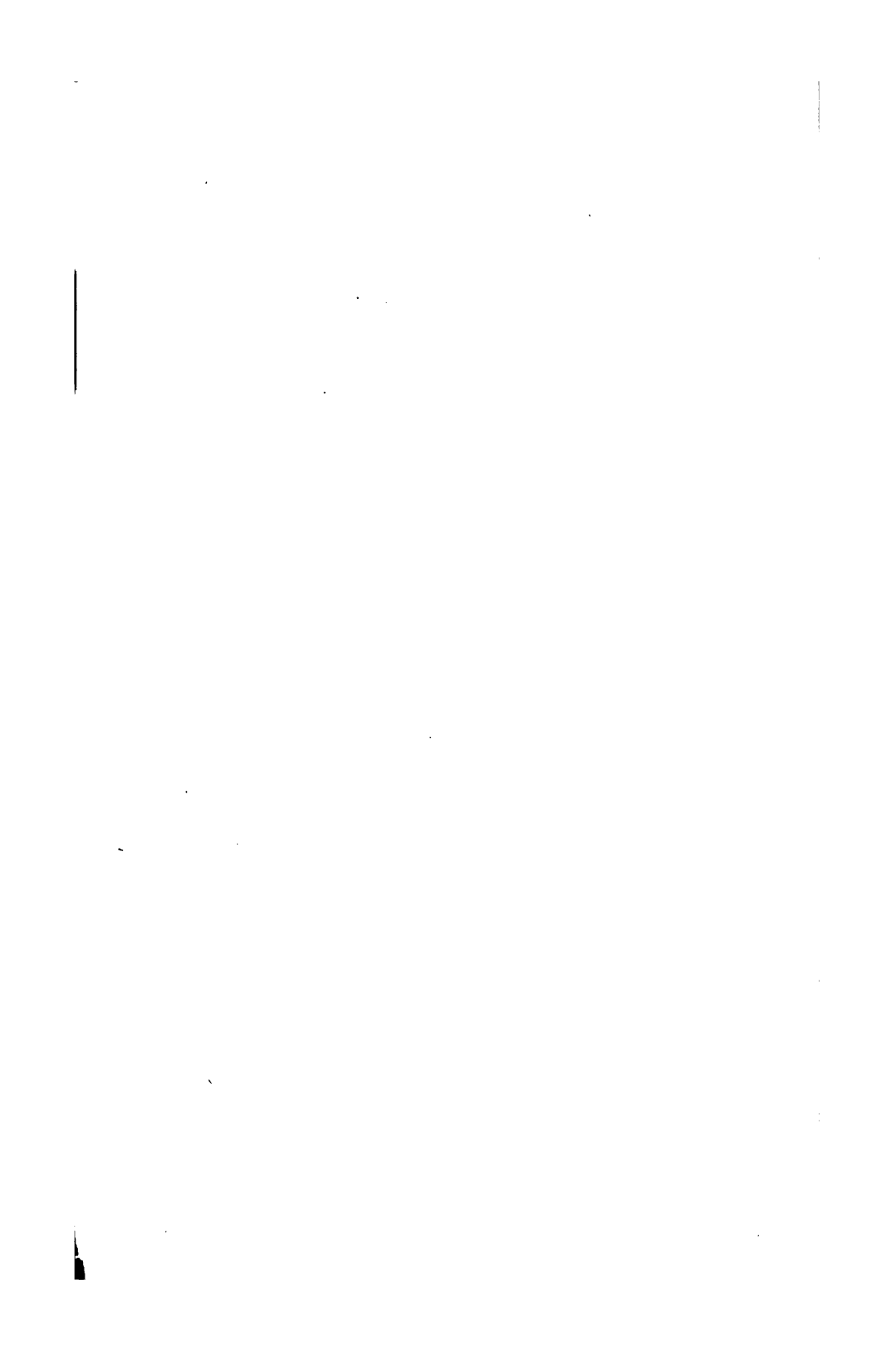




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AGNES TREMORNE.

AGNES TREMORNE.

BY

I. BLAGDEN.

"Patient through the watches long."—BROWNING.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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AGNES TREMORNE.

CHAPTER I.

It was past midnight as Wentworth bent his steps homeward. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and, instead of going the shortest way, he went round by the Piazza del Popolo.

Just as he reached the fountain, a carriage rumbled in at the gates and stood beneath the arch. He was attracted, as we all involuntarily are, by an arrival.

There was the usual pause and examination of passports and luggage. There appeared to be some trifling informality in one of the passports, and a great deal of fuss. The servant seemed

incapable of satisfying the sleepy officials ; at last one of the inmates of the carriage jumped out and expostulated with them. There was something in his figure and bearing that seemed familiar to Godfrey, and the thought darted through his mind whether it might not be Marmaduke Wentworth. With this idea came the recollection of who might be with him, and he turned away. The vehicle passed him a few minutes afterwards. Had the moon lit with a stronger ray the interior of the carriage, Wentworth's fate might have been a different one.

As he walked on, a comparison forced itself upon him, between the probable inmate of that carriage and Agnes ; and from this point his thoughts reverted to Laura Carmichael, her mother, her sister, and to most of the women he knew ; and thence again, as from the shadow to the light, to Agnes and to aunt May.

"Life is real, life is earnest," seemed to ring in his ears, amid the *dilettante* art, the amateur virtues, the make-believe occupations, which

women usually cling to; and then Agnes' daily and hourly sacrifices to her sister, her steady perseverance in her profession, her life, which so nobly fulfilled those two expressions of a Christian's life—self-development and self-abnegation—seemed to shine like a pillar of marble amid stucco columns.

As he walked rapidly onwards in the direction of the Coliseum, he felt so little inclined for the solitude of his own four walls, that he determined on entering the illuminated ruins. It was late, and the crowds had dispersed. As he entered, the last straggling carriage had left. There was only the sentinel pacing to and fro. He walked for some time in the weed-grown circle within. Insensibly the silence and calm made itself felt, and his thoughts became still as the place. The light of the moon shone on him, and mystically seemed to illumine with her own peaceful brightness his dark and perturbed thoughts.

He resolved he would make an excuse for his absence to Imogene, and go himself in search

of Herbert. He would ascertain his fate, and act accordingly. As he revolved his plans, he accidentally touched with his foot a stone which was beside the arch against which he leaned. To his amazement, the stone did not roll away as it might naturally have done, but it sank with a slight, dry, grating sound, and then returned to its place. He was so busy looking at it, and then stooping down to feel it, and so astonished to find it was no longer moveable, he did not notice that at the distance of about a dozen yards, the same dry, short knock had been heard, and in the space of a few seconds four masked men, who seemed literally to start from the earth, were upon him. Though taken at a disadvantage, he had not forgotten his early training; a vigorous blow freed him from one opponent, who fell, to the "infinite damage of his vertebral column," over one of the stones lying at the foot of the arch; and even while the hands of the others were at his throat, he would have probably taught them a lesson of English pugilism, but his own foot

slipped, and he fell with such violence that he was stunned.

As he fell, he had a sickening sensation that a dagger thrust had been made, and a burning, sharp feeling, which struck deep in his side and made his eyes dazzle, would have convinced him of the fact, had he not been well nigh insensible from his fall. His assailants paused for a minute.

"Let us finish the work," said one, and he muttered the frightful French *mot*, "the dead tell no tales!"

"Not here, for the sentinel to find him in the morning, and perhaps cause inquiry and inspection of the locality." At this moment the full light streamed on Wentworth's face. "Good God," he continued, "I would not for worlds harm this man. He is a friend of Italy. Let us take him within and consult our friends."

In a moment he was wrapped up in one of their cloaks, and borne under one of the arches. A match was struck, and a square piece of stone was raised by means of an iron ring in the centre. A steep step or two was visible. Here they

entered, closed the trap-door above them, and descended a dozen steps, then another moss-grown stone slipped aside, and led them into a tortuous passage, which, after windings and ascents innumerable, through two similar apertures brought them at last to a dozen steeper steps, which they ascended, and entered a kind of small subterranean chamber, opening upon another larger one, in which about a score of men were assembled. Wentworth was thrown down with little ceremony in a corner of the further room, a cloak thrown over him, and the three men went to make their report.

The change of temperature brought him to his senses after a while. He was at first entirely confused, and the pain and faintness from loss of blood were overpowering. He had been sharply hit in the side. His watch and purse had shielded him a little, but he had lost blood, and now that it had ceased to flow, he was in great pain. Recollection, however, came back, and he ground his teeth with impotent rage, at finding himself alone against such fearful odds, in what at first sight seemed

a den of brigands. He turned quietly and moved close to the wall, resolved to sell his life, if it was life they required, as dearly as possible, with that dogged resolution which is our national characteristic. All brave nations have a valour characteristic of them; but for single-handed, forlorn determination, commend me to an Englishman. He would not think, though a pale fair face seemed to rise before him entreatingly, but only set his teeth and clenched his hand. It was hard to die thus like a rat in a hole, at the very moment life was having some value in his eyes.

He looked into the next chamber. All the faces but one were masked, the persons assembled were listening to the one who spoke. He seemed to be detailing some numerical facts. The men who had attacked Wentworth had not interrupted, but stood just within the entrance of the room. At the first words he heard, Wentworth was satisfied he had not to deal with brigands, though his life might be in precisely the same, if not in greater, peril. Here there was no chance of a ransom being asked.

Very coolly, considering the circumstances, Wentworth tried to catch the words, and to find out where he was. He turned on his side, and saw that the room within was raised a step or two from the one in which he lay. Both compartments were hewn out of the rock, and it narrowed at the further end. Precisely opposite Wentworth was an aperture like a small window, from which could be seen as in a frame the Coliseum far beyond. From the manner in which it presented itself, Wentworth recognized his whereabouts. The illumination was over and the lights were dropping out one by one, but the outline remained distinct. Wentworth noticed this; and also the face of the man who was speaking. It was strongly marked about the brow and eyes, but the lower part looked like that of a *bon-vivant*. Wentworth also noticed that one of the masked figures who stood within the door, and who was one of the men who had attacked him, nay, he was sure the very man he had received the dagger thrust from, had something of the air and bearing of Moroni.

While he was noticing these things, the speaker's voice changed from the low monotonous repetition of figures to a louder tone. And he addressed to his hearers a strong, energetic appeal in favour of the good cause. His form seemed to expand into majesty as he spoke, and his face was animated and ennobled by his sincere ardour. He spoke of their struggles; they had been, he said, baffled, yet never entirely defeated; the at first slender stream was broadening and flowing with a freer course, and would reach the ocean at last. He dilated on the union between the brotherhood in all the countries, from the Alps to the Sicilian seas. He corroborated this by the fact that there had been some damage done by an earthquake in the autumn of the previous year at Pisa, and that instantly Bologna, Ferrara, Imola, Rome had sent contributions in aid of those who had suffered, expressing the fraternal sympathy of all Italians in a misfortune happening to an Italian city; and that when, two or three months since, the Tiber had overflowed its banks, and destroyed a number of houses in the

poorest districts of Rome, the scholars of Pisa had instantly subscribed from their small funds to assist the Romans, and charged the students of Rome with the distribution of their charity. The letters exchanged between the students of the Roman and Pisan colleges were read, and proved that a national federation amongst the colleges of Italy was an established fact. He mentioned how in Spain, America, in the East, in France itself, there were young Italians exercising themselves as soldiers, so that, when the time came, there should be hands able to do the work which the brains of the leaders had marked out. He did not disguise the obstacles—the want of funds, the difficulty of inspiring the rural population with patriotic sentiments, and yet the absolute necessity of being aided by them, as it was in the villages and mountainous districts that the patriots were obliged to take refuge when hunted by the law. He mentioned that noble instance of the devotion of the five Livornese, who, hearing that some of the Muratori band (which, after two months of

heroic endurance had been obliged to disperse) had escaped across the mountains till they had reached Vala on the seaboard of the Tuscan Maremma, left Leghorn in a fishing-boat, and, in defiance of the sanitary laws, so especially severe on that coast, which expose to peril of death those who break them, landed, sought and found the fugitives, took them on board, and rowed them safely to Corsica. When the patriotic committee at Pisa offered to reward them, these men—poor, needy, and in danger of ruin if discovered—unanimously refused.

A murmur of enthusiasm ran through his audience. He continued to specify in what manner Italy could be best served. By journalism, in the first instance—the pen was the pioneer which made way for the sword;—as far as possible, the study of other languages and of other nationalities was advised; and, in spite of the darkness of the political horizon, an organization of commercial speculation was counselled. Patience for the present, and hope for the future, were the watchwords.

A pine torch, which had been stuck in the wall opposite, threw its full light on the speaker's face, and Wentworth was struck with the noble expression which it wore as he dwelt on these themes.

"My brothers," he continued, "amidst that which I consider as proofs of the triumph of our cause, we must not forget those who are still its living martyrs. Let us think of Spielberg and its victims. We know that, since we met, some have been liberated by the great liberator Death from the power of their foes, one or two we hear have escaped; but if so, they have either perished ere they reached safety, or, broken in spirit and degraded in heart, have let fall their hands from the work—for they have never presented themselves, or given tidings of themselves to any of the brethren. These must be inquired for, examined, watched—and, if necessary, expelled from the associations which they have deserted; if," and the speaker's voice sank, "there is suspicion that they may betray us, and if aught in their conduct undeniably

confirms this suspicion, you know our oath. It is registered in the hearts of all. For the traitor there is but one doom—death. The names of the two missing prisoners are Herbert Tremorne and Ludovico Onati.”

Wentworth’s heart sank as he heard these terrible words, so calm yet uncompromising—not that he feared the threat; treason and the name of Herbert could not be joined together; but because it seemed to confirm his death. “And Imogene!” he almost groaned aloud. If Herbert were dead, what a responsibility was his!

“But let us leave this painful theme,” said the orator. “All our hearts know their duties, and, when the time comes, all will fulfil them. Let us think of this the seventh anniversary of our meetings in this Rome, triply fenced from all progress by superstition, ignorance and tyranny, and thank God, who has prospered our undertaking so far. Kneel, my brethren,” he continued, in a commanding tone, turning by a sudden impulse to the beautiful and yet glittering ruin seen through the window, “and, as we think of

that glorious Past, which lives luminously in our memories, even as that noble amphitheatre is brightly defined in the darkness around, swear to revive it; and let the threefold device on our banner, opposed to that of which their fatal tiara is the symbol, be Independence, Union, Freedom."

What would have sounded theatrical, and been open to ridicule in any other place, was natural and fitting here. The men knelt, and the speaker—he was a poet whose name is now known beyond his own country—improvised a prayer, with an exaltation and fervour worthy of the theme.

Do we not all know the magnetic power which one human soul, when inspired by a strong conviction, has over all within its reach? and here this influence was aided by the fiery eloquence of the speaker, the deep sympathy of those who listened to him, and the beauty of that language which skilful lips can mould to the soft utterance of the lute or the noble echoes of the clarion.

No one could be insensible to such an appeal. Wentworth's pulse throbbed high, and perhaps

no aspiration for the good cause was warmer than his. To the orderly Englishman there was something repugnant, perhaps, in the means adopted, but he was too clear-sighted not to appreciate the obligations of necessity, and not to know that this phase of secret meetings, conspiring fraternities, and masked assemblies, is obligatory on all who will search out the jewel Liberty amid the fetid atmosphere of despotism. In England the name of Italian liberal is synonymous with a gaunt individual, minus shirt and plus cloak, haunting the purlieus of Leicester Square, seeking literally what he can devour. With us poverty only speaks of failure, which is always despised and ridiculed; and we think we may laugh at the sorry sight such men present. Our laughter, however, is the sorriest aspect of the case to those who value the noblest qualities of humanity. In France an Italian liberal is considered the companion of assassins, loose women and profligates; his artistic accomplishments the bait by which he lures, deceives, and betrays all who trust in him. In isolated instances this

may be true, but it is ludicrously false of the mass. God himself, when He counts his jewels, will not leave unnoted those laborious, frugal, heroic lives, which in every capital of Europe have borne witness of what sterling metal are the exiled liberals of Italy.

As soon as the prayer was over, some of the men were preparing to disperse, when the three who had attacked Wentworth made their report. They related rapidly how, having been left on the watch, they had heard the signal, as it appeared, of a new-comer, had ascended, and found this stranger. Such a case had happened once before, and the man had been stabbed to the heart. He was recognized as a spy in the service of the government. What was to be the judgment here?

They spoke rapidly, and in a secret kind of language; but Wentworth's faculties were on the alert, and he concluded this was the purport of their speech. He did not pause for the answer, for he knew that if he waited for it there would be short shrift for him. He stepped into the midst of them, and addressing the speaker, said

that he had accidentally touched the secret spring which was their signal, he supposed; and for the rest he was not responsible; but that though he had become an unwilling witness of their meeting, their secret was safe with him, as he was known to some of the "*affiliati*" in the north.

"What proof can you give?" asked the stern voice of the man who was president for the evening.

Wentworth raised his arm, and drew a cabalistic figure in the air.

"*Aurora*?" asked the president.

"*A Lora*," rejoined Wentworth, and he made a second sign.

The president seemed satisfied.

"Stay," said one of the men. "Tall, fair, known to our brethren of the north, in possession of our sign and watchword? I believe this person is the Herbert Tremorne, whose name we have just heard!"

"Herbert!" murmured the voice of Carlo Moroni. "Oh, that I had stabbed him to the heart! if he has returned Agnese will escape me."

"My name is Wentworth; you can ascertain it immediately. I am Herbert Tremorne's friend, and am anxious to know——"

"Enough," said the president; "I am doubtful."

"Nay," said another voice, "I have met the signor, and I know, whatever he may be, he is a friend of Italy, and knows our brotherhood, and has served it in the north."

"Then you are answerable for him, and you know the responsibility which that entails. Pardon us," continued he, turning with stately courtesy to Wentworth, "but we must take precautions. We trust to your honour not to remove the bandage till you are told you can do so."

He made a sign—in a moment Wentworth's eyes were bandaged with a neck scarf by twenty officious hands, and he was led through what seemed a different set of passages and stairs. After a quarter of an hour he emerged into fresh air, and in ten minutes more the bandage was off his eyes, and he found himself walking towards Sta. Maria Maggiore, with a gentleman unmasked,

and in whom he recognized the dark, silent Italian he had met at Miss Carmichael's the first evening he was there. Both smiled as Wentworth showed he recognized him.

"I am indebted to you greatly ; my life was in peril, I think ?"

"*Cosa vuole*," said the Italian, with a shrug ; "our position necessitates precautions, and, what is worse, we find that a sincere and ardent love of Italy is compatible with a great many other qualities less praiseworthy. We have to defend ourselves from foes, spies, traitors. There are men faithful to the cause, who in every other respect are villains ; there are men who drop away from us from cowardice, fickleness, avarice, who are otherwise not bad men. But we do the best we can. The tools which erect a temple are often of the basest metal ; it is enough if they are used with skill and comprehension. Some of our most energetic patriots are men who have little of what is usually termed principle. There was one man there who, I saw, would not have scrupled to shed your blood."

"He thirsted for it, I suppose," said Wentworth, "because, like the tiger, he had tasted it." He touched his side. "I have an account to settle with him of a different nature."

"You are not Herbert Tremorne? his hatred seems directed to him."

"No," answered Wentworth, impatiently; "my name is Godfrey Wentworth. Here is my card."

"Unpronounceable, of course; so it is useless trying to read it," said his companion; "but I know you are a galantuomo, and I am glad I was of service to you."

They shook hands, and parted.

Wentworth respected his friend's incognito, and allowed him to leave him without asking his name.

Agitated and excited as he was, he had too strong a spirit of adventure in him not to again pass the Coliseum on his way to his own house. The illumination was all extinct, but the moonlight was pouring over it. All was quiet and still; there was the sentinel pacing up and down, and the rest might have been a dream.

He reached home anxious and wearied. In his troubled sleep he dreamed continually of Marmaduke Wentworth, waving his hand to him from a carriage; then it changed into the figure of Moroni, with a dagger held over him; and when he woke he seemed to feel the pressure of Herbert Tremorne's hand on his.

CHAPTER II.



THE Wentworths, on arriving in Rome, had driven immediately to the Via Felice, in which were the apartments that had been taken for them by Miss Laura Carmichael. It was ten o'clock when they arrived, and they were therefore fortunate in having missed that lady's welcome. Indeed the Wentworths came so long after they had first written, that the family in the Piazza di Spagna did not know when precisely to expect them.

Marmaduke descended first and assisted Millicent, and both of them, with the aid of the servants, half lifted, half supported the invalid into the house. While the rooms were being prepared he was gently laid on the sofa, and

the lady remained near him. Marmaduke went downstairs to give some orders for the next day.

The stranger seemed worn out by fatigue and illness. His features, pallid and wasted as they were, seemed fine and regular. The complexion, though coarse and sunburnt from apparent exposure of the face and hands, was, in what could be seen of the throat and arms, of a sickly fairness. At last he opened his eyes.

"How good you are!" he said, gratefully, addressing the lady; but his voice was thick, and the mode in which he spoke, strangely slow, hesitating, and unmodulated.

"Are you better?" asked Millicent, kindly.

"I feel I live, which is a great thing for me, who seem for ages to have been dying or dead. I cannot describe the extreme faintness."

"It is three weeks since you have been with us."

"Three weeks only! let me think,"—he sank back unequal to the effort. "I cannot remember: perhaps after I have slept I can connect things better—all seems a chaos here."

"I think you should see a doctor."

"Not yet."

"Will you see an Italian doctor? it may be more easy to express yourself in that language; you speak English with difficulty. You are a German, I believe?"

"It is strange I can speak anything; but I am an Englishman, not a German."

He tried to raise himself, but his features became convulsed with pain, and he sank down again. Mrs. Wentworth rang the bell, and the English maid and man servant, who had accompanied her on the journey, assisted him to the room prepared for him.

Mrs. Wentworth herself remained in the sitting-room waiting for her uncle. She was a pretty blonde. Her complexion was fair and pale, but it never changed. Her teeth were pretty, but her lips were thin, though very red, and her hair was beautiful. In early youth, with the soft dawn of girlhood on her face, she must have been lovely. The white pure brow, the long eyelashes which give such softness to the eyes, were suggestive of a sweetness of character which was borne out by

the gentleness of her manners. Few would have believed the material of the fabric was as hard as the exterior was smooth. Where self was not concerned, she was capable of kindness; but to win a point on which her vanity or ambition was interested, she was unscrupulous and cruel.

The object she proposed to herself in life was to be married to a rich man. If that rich man were Wentworth, the lover of her youth, she would be best pleased; but marry she would. She had directed Marmaduke's steps to Rome, for the purpose of renewing her intercourse with Wentworth. Through the Carmichaels she thought herself sure of this.

When her uncle returned to her he looked worried and displeased, and held a great bundle of letters and newspapers in his hand.

"Such a bore! Fancy, that fellow Rigby has thoroughly mismanaged the affair of the Grange!"

"What affair?"

"A place in Cornwall I was in treaty for; he has been so careless that there is some flaw in the purchase deeds. Godfrey has written

lately to his agent; he also would like to purchase it, and Rigby advises me to give the affair up and cede it to him. I shall have to return immediately to England."

"Impossible!"

"I must, though. There are complications about it I cannot explain; but I must be on the spot."

"When must you go?"

"I must be in England in ten days at the farthest."

"So soon?"

"Yes, I must be off to-morrow."

Millicent's heart sank.

"I am terribly knocked up," she began, hesitatingly.

"My dear Millicent, you do not think I am so mad as to suppose you can come. No, this house has been taken for a certain time, you must stay in it. I will leave you blank cheques on Torlonia's, and I will write to May, or try and see her to-morrow morning, to tell her to take care of you. As soon as you can, with

safety to his health, let our friend go—you must do so. There will be no difficulties, I think; but in the event of such a probability Wentworth would help you, of course. Now, good-night; you look as pale as a ghost; do not get up early on my account; I have not ordered the horses till twelve; and after I have seen May and made my necessary arrangements, I shall return to say good-bye.”

The uncle and niece parted affectionately. Millicent was pleased at this new turn of affairs. Marmaduke was the most indulgent and least watchful of guardians, but there was something about him which imposed a perpetual self-restraint on her, that she was glad to be rid of. A very truthful, transparent nature is often tacitly a stumbling-block to a false or deceitful one;—these latter find it difficult to be prepared against or to parry the obstacles which are most unconsciously offered by simple, straightforward characters, to the plans, projects, and stratagems in which designing people are always involved.

The next morning Marmaduke rose very early,

and having studied a map of Rome, which was part of his travelling apparatus, set off in the direction of St. Peter's. He was resolved to find his way to the Via Sant' Onofrio, and to see, if he could, but once, the living image of the woman he had so adored. He had heard that Imogene was exactly like her mother. We all of us have moments of childish longing, which draw us imperiously, and in opposition to the dictates of common sense. In Italy, Marmaduke lived in the very atmosphere of his past love; the words he heard, the ineffable softness of the language, the roses which were showering down over the walls of the old palaces he passed, the dark pines in the alleys of the gardens, were all fraught with memories of Imogene's beauty, and his own sorrow. His life had never been an active one, and he was therefore more completely under the dominion of past associations than most men are.

Agnes and Wentworth had spoken little when they left aunt May, but the feelings of both had been softened. Agnes had been grieved, but

she was too just not to see that in her intercourse with Wentworth, there was the great disadvantage of close intimacy and yet decided reserve, and that this was unfair to him. Wentworth, on his side, had felt how unjust it was to resent that which the necessities of her position forced upon her. With her it was impossible not to feel that she could walk undefiled in the most miry paths, where souls less pure might become stained. A woman like Agnes could not seek from choice a person like Moroni. When he left her at her own door, Wentworth said,—

“Miss Tremorne, why would you not recognize me to-day at the Gésu?”

Agnes' voice was very sweet, though it faltered a little as she replied,—

“I so distrust and fear the person I was with that I have long resolved he shall never touch my life but at the one point in which I am obliged to endure him. Were it not for Herbert, I should never see him.”

Wentworth was very happy when he shook hands with her that evening.

The next morning Agnes was painting assiduously. There may be moments when in acute grief, the obligation of work is irksome; but when one has fallen into any settled track of life, be it thorny or otherwise, our sweetest moments are passed in earnest work. Agnes possessed, in an eminent degree, that union of patience with energy, which is genius. Her studio was a temple in which the highest faculties of the mind were at once ministered to and ministering. The soul inspired the genius, and was revealed by it. Agnes, the individual, was merged in the artist who interpreted the beautiful, which became manifest to her and which was born in her.

While Agnes was assiduously painting the foreground of her picture, an Andromeda, (a symbolic personation of the land she so loved, though the victorious Perseus who has since delivered it was not then even dreamed of,) Santa entered. She brought a note from Moroni, deferring the next interview for a few days. She had also brought as an offering from Giacinto a basket of roses, but such roses! A large wicker basket

bent down at the sides, and brimming over with those exquisite *rose di Maggio*, which are the joy of Rome. What an ever renewed miracle to sight and sense are these abundant and universal summer gifts! God is so profuse in his charities to us, that we become almost insensible to them. What would be our admiration and surprise did the summer give but one rose? As it is, how incommensurate is our appreciation of the felicity it is to live in a world adorned with such lavish beauty! Agnes was better taught, and she bent over them with delight. The dew on their lovely petals was fresh, and the fragrance at their hearts filled the room. Santa's eyes expressed great contempt at this childishness of the Englishwoman. It gave her a feeling of great superiority, that a *forestiera* should think so much of flowers, which the poorest peasant could have given her. She left the letter and took her leave.

As she went downstairs, she met a gentleman, who asked if two English ladies lived in the house. She looked at him from head to foot as

she returned the inevitable *Non saprei*, with which Italians usually consider it safest to answer interrogatories.

"Are you sure?" he replied; "I was directed to this house."

He spoke Italian so well, that Santa thawed a little. He was a middle-aged man, handsome, but with an air of languor on his countenance, which might mean sorrow or only *ennui*. Santa had often seen that expression on English faces.

"Did you want to see them?" she asked.

"No:" and a faint tinge of colour came to his cheeks. "I wished merely to inquire for them, I have no time for calling. Is the eldest lady at home?"

"I know but of one English lady who lives here." Santa had never heard of Imogene.

Marmaduke, for it was he, thought he had mistaken the house, and turned away. He looked disappointed, and began descending the stairs with her. She thought her information deserved a *buona mano*; but he looked preoccupied and as if he had forgotten her. She spoke again.

"There are *forestiere* in this next house."

He looked up with a start, and remembered at once that he had failed in his duty, and put some money in her hand.

Santa felt certain that it was Agnes he was inquiring after; but with that perverse feeling of antagonism which she felt towards her, resolved that no communication between them should take place by means of her. She had a dim instinct that it was part of her loyalty to Carlo Moroni to isolate Agnes as much as possible.

Marmaduke consented to go to the next house, and in the ineffectual search a great deal of time was lost. When he looked at his watch, he found it wanted but a few minutes to 12 o'clock, and his horses were to be at the door at that hour. It was too late even to see aunt May. He was vexed that his childish desire of having a glimpse (himself unseen) of Imogene, had prevented him shaking hands with aunt May. How he was to have managed to have seen Imogene, he had not decided; but he thought that once in the house inhabited by the sisters,

an opportunity would offer. He had failed in this, and what was of more consequence, had no more time to see aunt May. Could he have done so and spoken with her on the subject of the invalid who had accompanied them to Rome, fatal consequences might have been avoided. Aunt May's quickness of comprehension would have detected the truth, or at least suspected it sufficiently, to lead to its discovery, and all would have been saved. As it was, it seemed like Marmaduke, in the few hasty lines he sent to her, to say nothing which could even excite an interest in aunt May. He was too indolent and too indifferent to the common usages of life.

In tracing the current of our lives, to what insignificant agencies must we not assign some of the most important consequences ! A child's hoop against a horse's legs may cause the death of a man, and from that death follows the ruin of the family of which that man was the head. The shying of a horse overthrew a dynasty, and thus gave a new heaven and new earth to the Europe of the treaty of

Vienna. The wrong delivery of a letter, or its non-arrival, a mistake about a card or an address, have entirely and fatally altered the whole lives of some of us. "The children of Alice call Bertram father," because on the day on which we intended bidding her farewell, and trying to discover whether she had noticed the deep and passionate interest with which we had regarded her, a ball thrown by a child having struck and nearly blinded her, we were not allowed to see her. When we returned from active service in India, Alice's eyes were well, and her heart and hand were Bertram's. Oh, that child's ball! Anathema-maranatha!

While Agnes was painting, after she had read the note, which deferred for a few days her next interview with Moroni, aunt May was announced. Since she had become more intimately acquainted with Agnes, aunt May often spent the morning with her. A little sofa was placed for her particular use in the studio. These were very happy mornings.

Aunt May's health had so kept her from the

wear and tear of life, that she was much younger in mind than in years. Thoughtful, appreciative, original, her companionship was at once refreshing and invigorating to one who led such a retired life as Agnes. Aunt May read universally ; with Agnes the love of reading was an unslaked thirst. Books are difficult to procure in Rome ; but aunt May had brought a good many with her, and she was ever receiving fresh packets of reviews, magazines, and new publications. The powerlessness of her limbs only seemed to add to the activity of her mind, and there was no great social, religious, or political question which interested the leading spirits of the time that did not in its turn occupy her.

Agnes knew more of external nature, and had led such an independent life, that she could judge for herself, and act, where her friend, though her senior, was helpless as a child ; but in the world of books she, in her turn, followed and learned of May.

It was a beautiful friendship : to Agnes it had come like a new sense, so much was life enlarged

and vivified by it. With aunt May's admiring affection for Agnes there blended a sort of maternal interest, which rendered it the sweetest feeling she had ever experienced.

I think few writers lay sufficient stress on the large space which a true friendship, such as two mature minds can feel for each other, holds in the lives of two single women, and what exquisite enjoyments are derived from it. In the personal intimacy which exists in such a relation, there is entire comprehension and knowledge of each other. This is seldom attained, even in the holiest and truest marriage. It requires a sixth sense, which few possess, for a man to penetrate every fold of a woman's character; and few men permit a woman to tread the inner sanctuary of their souls. The touch-stone is wanting, and the measures with which the two sexes weigh character are unequal; but two women who dwell together, work together, and who, in the highest sense of the word, *live* together, see each other face to face;—love is theirs in its purest impersonality, and yet in its closest sympathy.

When I try to realize the words, "the communion of saints," I can imagine nothing more perfect or more sacred than an affection of this nature—warm as fire, clear as flame, but without the smoke which too often accompanies all other love, and without the ashes into which it usually burns.

"I have come," said aunt May, "to tell you that, by a strange coincidence, at the very time we were talking of Marmaduke Wentworth he was entering Rome. They came last night. Unfortunately, as I supposed would be the case, the letters which he found waiting for him, oblige him to hasten back to England. He must already be on his way homewards."

"You did not see him, then?"

"No; I received a few lines from him, telling me of this, and begging me to assist Millicent, should she need help. She is left here alone, but she has servants, an unlimited credit on Torlonia, and Laura and my sister will do all that is necessary for her."

"You do not like Mrs. Wentworth, I think?"

"No; a person like myself, who observes,

but rarely mixes with others, is less influenced than most people are by mere personal attractions. Millicent is beautiful, but she has a cold, selfish nature, and a plausible, contriving disposition, which is peculiarly obnoxious to me. Those soft, sleek women are always so ruthless."

"Is she so very beautiful?"

"She is one of those suggestive-looking women who are irresistible to men. There is a promise given by every turn of their figure, every glance of their eyes, every curve of their mouth, which excites as well as charms."

"Aunt May, you are bitter."

"No; I know that in the long run, truth prevails, and that even beauty finds its level at last. After a time, men can accept the horrible fact, that great sweetness of appearance may be co-existent with great sterility of heart, and then they learn the true language of the human countenance. Balzac says, '*Bienheureuses sont les laides, car à elles appartient le royaume de l'amour.*' I disagree with him. There may be irregularity, or even defect, but the true beauty

must be there, or they would not inherit the kingdom of love. The soul is creative, for it is an emanation of the Creator; and however marred by accidental or hereditary fault the form which clothes it, there must be moments when it asserts itself, and glorifies the clay which it shapes."

"Beside this," said Agnes, "the effect produced by a beautiful face is so superior to the effort made, that the consequences must be an inertness of mind and an unavoidable numbing of the sensibility. A beautiful face gets credit for all that the most beautiful soul is often inadequate (if clothed in homely garments) to assert or manifest."

"Exactly so; eyes veiled by long dark lashes have a softness, lips curving over white teeth have a brilliancy, quite independent of tenderness and cheerfulness; and yet the mere aspect of them awakens these impressions."

"Now and then, however, plain features acquire a beauty from the owner's inward and spiritual grace, and then the charm is tenfold increased. I often find in my models, that the most perfect in feature can rarely assume the depth of expres-

sion I require." At this moment Imogene's bell rang, and Agnes left the studio. Aunt May said she would wait her return. While she sat alone, Wentworth entered. She told him of his uncle's arrival, and he told her of his last night's adventure. They both agreed it was best to be silent and to say nothing to Agnes, of the scene in the Coliseum. Finding she remained absent longer than they expected, Wentworth, who had an engagement, left aunt May, promising to return in an hour.

When Agnes came back, she looked grave.

Aunt May told her that Wentworth had been to the studio and would return.

"I am so glad!"

There was something in the tone of her voice which made aunt May look up.

"What is the matter, Agnes?"

"I find Imogene so strange this morning. She says she feels well, that she has slept well. Mary, who always sleeps in the same room, says she did not wake or seem disturbed the whole night, and yet she looks pale and ill, and so

unaccountably depressed that the tears are dropping from her eyes, while she is so nervous and restless she can scarcely keep herself quiet in one place. I have never seen her so before. She is most impatient for Mr. Wentworth's arrival, for she says, she feels he must be ill or suffering in some way."

"She is most wonderfully susceptible, is she not?"

"Most mysteriously so. Even before her illness, in our happy days at Venice, she was aware of Herbert's return to us after any of his absences, even if he had hoped to surprise us earlier than we expected him; and she would often be conscious that he was going to leave us before he had uttered a word of his intentions of doing so. Hers is the most impressionable organization I have ever known or heard of. My father, who had studied a good deal the most abstruse branches of human knowledge, said that in former times Imogene would have been burnt for a witch. That he traced in her a physical subtlety of perception and impression which explained the phe-

nomena attributed to the possession of these faculties in the mediæval periods. But you say Mr. Wentworth is well, and will return shortly?

"Yes." Aunt May hesitated, and then told Agnes what had happened the night before. "We did not wish to tell you," she added, "but this may explain Imogene's state."

Agnes turned pale.

"Indeed it does; the danger to him would be enough to affect her, and she may be conscious of some danger or peril to Herbert himself. She will suffer from both. How wrong I have been! Would I could undeceive her!"

"No, I will not say that I think you were right at first; I think I would then have told her at any risk it was a mistake: truth is always best; and God loves those who are beloved by us so much more than we can do, that we ought to think them safe in His hands, even if we are obliged by fortuitous circumstances to see them suffer. But now you must be patient and wait; the truth must be told, but not at present. A solution may naturally offer itself to your doubts, if Herbert

should return. You see the belief among his friends is, that he has escaped."

"Yes; but that Ludovico, whom they named as also missing, is dead; and they are not aware of it."

"But they were going to make inquiries which will soon apprise them of the fact. Then also you may have tidings of Herbert. Do not be so sad, my dearest."

Aunt May stooped to kiss her.

"How good you are!" said Agnes; "it seems to me, although nothing is really altered in my position, that life is quite changed to me since I have known you. A hand to hold, a staff to lean on, makes the steepest path seem easy. I used to think I could spare no portion of my heart for any one but Imogene; but dearly as I love her, the disparity of age between us, and yet more the difference in our habits and pursuits, caused by her peculiar constitution, have left, I find, a wide margin in me, which required an affection like yours to fill up."

"And as for me, Agnes, whose family ties have

never offered a complete sympathy,—it has given a new sweetness to my whole life. I have resolved that you and I henceforth shall never be far apart. This new element will give a new direction and impulse to my existence. It is such a mistake to suppose, as so many do, that there is but one feeling strong enough to mould or inspire a life,—love between man and woman. It may seem so, when the man and the woman, in the highest, truest sense of the word Union, complete each other's lives, and offer on earth a shadow of that love which is our idea of God's sustaining, comprehensive, creative love; but practically, where do we find such marriages? Meanwhile, setting aside all the false, illusory, inconsistent reasons on which marriages are usually based, is there not the co-existent fact of an increasing number of single women? Are they to live lonely, unloved lives, because what is considered the only outlet for human affection is denied them? They are taught this, and believe it, and suffer from it. Why should not two friends of the same sex, even

if there should be no tie of relationship between them, live together, enriching each other's lives with mutual sympathy, and uniting their aimless destinies in one bond of love ? ”

“ Yes, the true sacrament of life is sympathy ; without it, our spiritual life would often sink and become dead ; with it, we are strengthened and stimulated. I have found that even in the art which I so love (and for which I would always live)— with no genial human soul beside me to encourage and help me—there were often long periods of barrenness and of unproductive labour ; now, I seem to be freer, stronger, and more healthy in my work.”

“ I believe it,” said aunt May ; “ and even were you one day to marry (do not blush, I would not grudge you to one who could realize to you that love of which I spoke) ; I should still feel that you had entered into my being, and that nothing could dispossess you of your place in it. As far as possible, we would remain near each other. If you do not marry, let this great love we bear each other be the foundation of our future lives ;

something to cling to in sorrow, something to clasp in joy, a solace in your mature age, a comfort in my declining years."

Agnes did not answer, but kissed aunt May tenderly. The bond between them held fast from that hour. At this moment the carriage was announced, and Wentworth returned in time to assist aunt May downstairs. When he came back, Agnes had been once more summoned to Imogene, and he followed her into the sitting-room. Imogene was seated by the window on her couch, her eyes were closed, and she was pale as death. When she heard his step, she looked up and flushed all over.

"Are you well, dear Herbert?"

"Quite well, Imogene; what is the matter?"

"I cannot tell you how strange I feel; has nothing happened?"

"Nothing."

She put her hand to her forehead.

"I feel as if you had been ill; you are ill," she said, starting to her feet, and taking his arm.

"No, it is you who are ill, Imogene, I see."

He tried to soothe her; and with Agnes' help she was induced to lie down on the sofa, while he made the usual mesmeric passes over her.

After a while she slept and seemed more composed, but on awaking, though a little quieter, she did not recover her usual spirits. She was silent and absent, and appeared listening for some expected sound. At times she tried to conquer it, but confessed at last that she could not, and what was more, that she should prefer being left quiet.

"It is so confusing," she said; "I see you, Herbert, well, looking just like yourself, standing near me, and yet, at the same time, I see you stretched dying on a bed before me. I want to get to you, and yet you are there holding my hand."

Wentworth attributed this disturbed state of her nerves to some electrical state of the atmosphere, but it did not excite in him the mysterious awe it did in Agnes. With the awe there was a dim hope in her mind that perhaps nature was asserting itself, that some voice in her heart

would gradually reveal to Imogene the error she was in.

For some days Imogene's illness continued. All other thoughts were set aside in the anxiety which this strange relapse caused. But it was only temporary. After some time she got better, and seemed to gain strength even more rapidly than at first. Aunt May came often to see her, and tried to help Agnes and Mary in the task of nursing her. She would sit with Imogene while Agnes painted, or was out sketching. The lessons had been put a stop to ; Agnes had written to Miss Laura Carmichael that she was prevented leaving home by the illness of her sister.

Laura Carmichael was not sorry. She was getting tired of her artistic mania. Millicent's arrival had turned her thoughts into another channel. She cared nothing for art or artists, but hoped that, as soon as Millicent had rested sufficiently from her journey, they would resume their former habits and be inseparable as before.

Millicent, with her usual reserve, never named her guest, and Miss Carmichael was so little

curious about any one not in "her set" that she entirely forgot his existence.

Mrs. Wentworth both feared and disliked aunt May, and had only paid her one formal visit since her arrival. To aunt May's questions about the invalid she had answered with a smile at her uncle's Quixotic benevolence, as she termed it, and had confessed her entire ignorance of who or what he was. He was too ill now, she said, to be agitated by questions, but when he was recovered aunt May might see him if she wished it. Till then aunt May was content to say nothing about him to Wentworth or Agnes. The former knew Mrs. Wentworth was in Rome, and this knowledge effectually prevented him from going to see the Carmichaels. In no way, therefore, had he any chance of hearing of the stranger.

CHAPTER III.



THE morning after Marmaduke's departure the invalid in the Via Felice had had a relapse, and again symptoms of brain fever supervened. Millicent sent for a doctor, who attended him with great skill; and after some days he began to show evident signs of amendment.

Miss Carmichael had called once or twice, but her dear Millicent pleaded fatigue, and would not be persuaded to accompany her in her walks and drives. Laura did not know that the fatigue was the consequence of her friend's unremitting attentions to her *protégé*. She concluded Mrs. Wentworth had some reasons for this retirement, and was content to bide her time.

Meanwhile Millicent was indefatigable in her

exertions. To nurse a fellow-creature is an occupation which for most women has a great charm. Mrs. Wentworth had a great many faults, but she was not unlike her sex in this. She nursed the stranger with unremitting kindness, and the most disinterested compassion. Disinterested is scarcely the word, she *did* hope to win his love and gratitude; but there she stopped, and for once in her life the scheming heart went no further. Rosy clouds veiled the future.

She nursed him day and night. Had the man been anything but the simple upright creature he was, he would have probably presumed on the situation. Whenever he woke, soft blue eyes were fixed on him, watching his every breath; his medicines were all given to him by white hands, which tenderly chafed his, smoothed his pillows, and softly lingering, bathed his feverish forehead with refreshing essences! To a vain man, there would have been exquisite enjoyment in all this. The position of the petted patient of such a tender and adoring nurse would have been

fraught with gratification, which he would have indulged in freely, and accepted without reserve or delicacy; but this man was of a rare character. He felt the kindness to his heart's core, he responded to it with the sincerest gratitude and affection; but never by word, look, or gesture did he imply that he considered this kindness a mark of personal and individual preference. He regarded it, and showed that he regarded it, as the evidence of a good and benevolent nature excited strongly by all suffering which came before it.

His illness was severe, and for days there seemed no hope of his life or reason; then the fever abated, but left an extreme weakness which it was feared would prove fatal; at last youth, a good constitution, the skill of his physician and the care of his nurse prevailed, and he recovered. It was like a new birth, so slowly did life return. But the disease and previous suffering had been so violent that it was out of the throes and vicissitudes of no ordinary convalescence that he found himself at last, seated

"in his right mind," one afternoon in the sitting-room beside his indefatigable guardian.

"You certainly look much better to-day," said Mrs. Wentworth, as she sat beside his couch preparing him some lemonade.

"I feel as if I had passed from hell to heaven ; but it is not only the illness—all my previous sufferings seem to have been recalled during these dreadful weeks, to prove to me, how thankful I ought to be for my wonderful escape."

"Escape?"

"It is right I should tell you, that I am an escaped prisoner from Spielberg."

"Good heavens!" and Mrs. Wentworth turned pale. She had no clear ideas on the subject, but it was more like romance than reality, that a real live prisoner should be seated so quietly in her presence.

"I feel I ought to free you from the peril in which I place you of being tormented by the police," and he tried to rise, but fell back quite unequal to the effort.

"There," she said, "you will make yourself ill again: pray be quiet! There is no fear whatever. You have your passport, so there can be no danger. I will not ask your real name," she said, raising her finger, for he was beginning to expostulate: "then there can be no possibility of your being discovered."

"But there are friends, relations of mine, I must seek."

"You can seek no one now," said Mrs. Wentworth, with pretty petulance; "you must be content to remain where you are till you are quite well. My uncle will be back soon, and till he returns to give his advice, I must beseech you to make yourself happy here."

The escaped prisoner sighed heavily.

"I am not ungrateful for all your goodness; there are others yet living, I trust, who will thank you for it even more than myself—if I could only be assured of their safety—but I know it is more prudent to be patient a little longer. I will not compromise you or them by seeking them yet."

"You are too ill to think of anything but how to get well. Now you must rest," she said, giving him a restorative.

He remained quiet for an hour, his hand pressed over his eyes. She took her work and sat near him. When he at last dropped his hand, he met her eyes—she had heard the slight movement, and immediately turned to see if he wanted anything. The tears came to his eyes as he noticed this, and taking her hand he pressed it respectfully to his lips.

"How shall I thank you?" he said.

"Be cheerful," she answered kindly, "and do not think of sad things."

"If you know what a gulf seems to divide the existence of the last four years from a scene like this, and yet how strangely familiar it all seems to me!"

"I wonder if he is married," thought Mrs. Wentworth, and she was astonished to find that the idea gave her a pang. "Tell me all about Spielberg," she said, with a womanish curiosity, and an utter ignorance of the dark and cruel

page of human experience she was going to turn over.

"I will," he said, "it is like a spectre which haunts me; perhaps if I tell you about it I shall exorcise it. I am an Englishman, but my mother and her family were all Italians. I was educated at Turin. I had early lost my father, and lived with an uncle, who had been obliged, from economical reasons, to live in Italy. He chose Venice for his place of abode, and I spent some of my vacations with him. As soon as I had chosen my profession, that of an artist, I travelled a good deal. I made a pedestrian tour through Switzerland, and there met with the dearest and most intimate friend I ever had—he bore your name—Wentworth,—Godfrey Wentworth."

"Godfrey Wentworth?" exclaimed Millicent; and as she looked at him, she was struck for the first time with his wonderful likeness to Godfrey: though younger, slighter, with a far less determined expression in the face, there was a wonderful resemblance, yet less at this period of his life than at any other. In long

and hopeless captivity, the iron does not only enter the soul, but the brand is marked on the brow. A man may walk from a prison to the scaffold, and look the hero he is; he braces himself for the occasion, and his whole being is pitched in its loftiest key; death can be confronted with majesty and triumphed over; but in the long wearying hours of solitude, of imprisonment, a permanent collapse takes place in his energies, and the whole person wears the expression of it.

"Yes, Godfrey Wentworth is my greatest friend—my only friend out of my own family. Is he a relative of yours?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Wentworth, drily; "but go on——"

"My studies and associates all led me to take part with the efforts and struggles of Italian liberals. I was a cosmopolite; but the country which claimed most from my sympathies was Italy. I am an artist, but it has always seemed to me that our development should be twofold—the one individual, the other social. While such a rich

portion of God's creation is suffering, it is incumbent on all to put their hands to the work. I became known to some of the heads of the liberal party, and was able to serve them. I thank God for it. It was at Venice, after many hairbreadth escapes in other cities, where Wentworth was of the greatest service to me; indeed, but for him I must have been seized on many occasions——”

“Your likeness to him must have been of use.”

“Yes, often it was so; I feared sometimes that the chances of fate would suddenly alter, and that the resemblance might injure him, as much as it had benefited me; but I trust it has never been so.”

“He is perfectly well and prosperous,” said Mrs. Wentworth, somewhat sarcastically; “pray continue.”

“It was at Venice then, where I had gone on domestic affairs,”—he shuddered slightly—“that I was arrested.”

He covered his face with his hands.

Mrs. Wentworth could see that his whole frame trembled in agony. It was like the convulsion which usually succeeds some fatal blow.

"Do not try yourself; you have not strength yet for such agitating recollections."

"I think I cannot to-day, but to-morrow I will tell you all. It seems that if I could once speak of it I should break the spell and be better."

He retired, leaving Mrs. Wentworth alone. Her reflections were long and deep. She did not wonder now at her scarcely acknowledged partiality for one who, besides the strong claim of having called out her best and kindest feelings, was so intimately connected with the man whom in early youth she had truly loved. For awhile it had been true love; but she was poor, homeless, worldly. She yielded to the temptation of wealth and position; but the better part of her nature had suffered, and had avenged itself for the suffering by mingling a good deal of remorse, and some regret, with her brief time of prosperity. She wondered now whether the circumstance of her having cared so tenderly for his friend, might

be the means of reconciling Wentworth to
it. Whatever should be the consequence, she
would always feel happier for having so acted.

The next day the escaped prisoner resumed
his narrative :—

“To tell you that from the moment I fell into
the power of my gaolers I had but one thought
—that of escape—is needless. But for that hope,
human beings must rot away in such dungeons.
The crime against humanity, of which those
governments are guilty who revenge political of-
fences in this manner, is one which God him-
self will judge. If I honestly think that the
liberty of another human being is injurious to
the cause which, in my opinion, is identified with
right, and if he deliberately transgresses, I believe
that law has a right to vindicate its authority, and
prevent a recurrence of the offence ; but this whole-
sale revenge on hundreds and hundreds of human
beings, by tortures, indignities, and lifelong martyr-
dom, is indefensible. The political cruelties of abso-
lute governments is the germ from which their
future ruin will be evolved. It is the most short-

sighted policy they can adopt. Not only is it certain that a cause, which numbers such martyrs as ours, is based on convictions that must finally triumph, but the whole community becomes gradually leavened with ideas that wage war to the knife with all tyrannical abuses. One member of a family is the victim, but the family itself will become his avengers, from generation to generation. Stringent pressure always produces a rebound."

The young man paused, for he felt he was speaking of subjects which did not interest his listener.

"I was dragged from Venice to Milan; after a lingering, tedious imprisonment there, a mock trial brought me to my doom—fifteen years' imprisonment in Spielberg, to date only from the day when the fetters were placed on my limbs, and the doors of my cell had closed on me!

"I shared my cell with another, a brave, noble creature, whose brotherly kindness saved me from utter despair. I should have died in the first few months but for him. There were other

cells in the same part of the prison, which were shut out by a strong iron door and a steep staircase from the less severe dungeons of the better treated prisoners. In spite of the prohibitions of our gaolers, we became acquainted with our fellows in misery, and by means of a language which we invented, held communication with each other. The gaolers were stupid, brutal, obedient like machines to their orders, but not wantonly cruel. They visited us at certain regular intervals, but between their visits we were enabled to converse. About two years since a fever broke out in the prison, which was as fatal among the gaolers as among ourselves. For some days their number was diminished, and during this time four of my companions escaped. To one I entrusted a letter for Wentworth, and for my cousins, for I was too ill to make the effort to escape, as had been intended; besides, my companion, who shared my cell, was dying, and I would not leave him. He died two days later, and the grief and disappointment were so injurious to me, that on the afternoon on which the gaoler

put him in his coffin, he left me for dead also. The man had taken off the fetters from the corpse, and looking at me, came up to my couch. He raised my arm, and then let it fall with an abruptness which seemed to dislocate every joint and pierce every nerve ; I was stunned for a moment ; when recollection returned I heard his steps retreating, and the bang of the great door as it closed after him. He had drawn the coarse coverlet over my face. My limbs felt an unwonted lightness, for he had removed the fetters from them. The gust of wild hope which throbbed through my veins, gave me the strength of madness. I crawled from my bed ; I felt for the door ; it was not even closed. The gaoler had saved himself the trouble of fastening it upon a corpse ! I was in the corridor between the cells. Opposite the door above, was a window high in the wall. It looked into a ditch, and was not commanded by any other windows ; beyond, but below it, was a small platform, on which a sentinel had been stationed. But since the number of the prisoners began to diminish, he had been removed. I returned

to my cell, knotted together my sheet and coverlet, and fastened them to an upper bar of this window. With an effort, which was like the gripe of a drowning man, I reached this bar, and emaciated as I was, pushed through. In so doing I grazed the skin off my arms and legs, which bled profusely. I clung to the ledge, which was scarcely wide enough, and unknotted the sheet and coverlet, drew them after me, that they might not become the betrayers of my flight; I found the fissures of the wall gave me footing on this side; but my clothes were almost torn to pieces in my descent, and I shivered with cold as I stood on the platform. It was a bitter winter's night. At last I descended, and rested for an hour in the ditch;—it was deep and muddy: but I knew that I had, in all probability, four or five hours before me. I walked, or rather waded, for it now began to rain, and the ditch was rapidly filling; but I knew it was most prudent to take this path, for here my steps could not be traced till I had reached the end, which was outside the gate of the town. But beside the ditch was

an embankment, and in this lay my chief difficulty, for it was very high and straight. It seemed not only almost impossible to scale it, but in doing so I must have left traces in the soft earth, which would have showed the direction of my flight.

While I crouched in despair at the foot of the embankment, the wind rose, the sky cleared, and the moon made herself visible, showing me that even as I stood, my feet were sinking deep in the ground. I was terrified: I knelt down, and effaced, as well as I could, these marks. As I stood, the wind increased to a tempest, and large, loose stones, which had been left for the purpose of repairs, being displaced by the storm or by a landslip, rolled about me in every direction. In the midst of my despair, the thought suddenly flashed across me, that I might ~~make~~ these stones useful in concealing my ascent. I lifted up the largest, and placed it where I had been standing, and in this manner, creeping on my hands and feet, and hiding each step I made by a stone or a piece of brick, I reached the top. When I had done so I felt utterly

exhausted, but I was outside the gate; though barefooted, and almost naked, the feverish strength which burned in my veins did not desert me, for I was not yet out of peril.

“The wind was blowing furiously, and I felt rejoiced, for I knew that it would blow away every trace of my passage. Before daylight there was another change, and the drenching rain must have further obliterated every footprint I had made.

“I remembered that had I been able to organize my escape with my friends, we were to have met in a wood, about eight miles distant, at a woodman’s cottage, whom one of them knew. I thought it advisable, in case suspicion had been roused, not to go to this spot. I entered the forest, but in a different direction. I shall never forget the sensation of relief I experienced, when, having entered an intricate growth of young trees, I heard the noise of water, and, putting down my parched lips, drank the first clear draught of fresh water I had tasted for years. It seemed more intoxicating than wine.

“It was morning now, and with little difficulty I found a spot in which I could conceal myself. It was scarcely five miles from Spielberg, and I felt that it would be overlooked from its vicinity, even if a strict search were instituted. But it is a peculiarity of the barbarous system under which I suffered, that no very strict measures are ever taken to re-capture prisoners. Every precaution is used to secure them; but when they have once escaped, either from indolence, or stolid indifference, or from some lingering feeling of humanity, their pursuit is not very relentless or persevering.

“I felt I must rest, for my limbs were failing me, and my brain was giddy with exhaustion. I found a lightning-struck tree, whose trunk curved athwart the bed of a stream. This trunk was quite hollow, and about it, and over it, there was such a growth of weeds and underwood, that it was almost concealed. I entered in as far as I could, and, throwing myself down, was soon asleep. I should have slept had I been in a den of wild beasts, at the cannon’s mouth, in a sinking

ship, so thoroughly was I worn out. I must have slept eight hours. I was awake by the pangs of hunger. It was now evening, but I knew pretty well the direction I must take to get through the wood. I picked up some acorns and chesnuts, and endeavoured through the night to cheat my hunger with this meagre repast; at last, the straggling houses of the village broke through the darkness. I waited till the men had gone to their early field work, and then resolved to take my chance.

“At the first door I saw a woman. I begged food and raiment. She did not belie her sex; she shook her head at first, but soon slipped into the hut, and brought me out a bowl of some hot, farinaceous concoction, with bacon in it. She bade me make haste, lest her father should return to breakfast, and gave me an old tattered blouse. I obeyed her, thanking her with all my heart, and dragged myself along, a little invigorated.

“This was my history for seven days and nights. I hid myself during the day, and crawled

out in the evenings and mornings. I always begged of women: I usually obtained a little food or a trifling coin. One poor woman gave me some shoes, and a jacket and trowsers. She looked at me mournfully.

“‘My son has been dead a year—he was just such a one as you.’

“She wept as I blessed her. In this manner I reached ——

“There I remembered, that in one of my pedestrian tours, I had made the acquaintance of a village school-master, and I determined on going to him. I knew he would not refuse me shelter. I found him. He lived alone without a servant, in a dreary kind of lodge of an old hunting domain, quite abandoned by its owners. He recognized me, and the poor man was rejoiced to see me. I told him openly who I was, and that there might be danger in harbouring me. He would not hear of it. He gave me his bed, and for three months nursed me as his brother, for nature gave way, and I had an illness of three months’ duration. I stayed with him eighteen

months. I did not dare to write to any one, for fear of drawing suspicion on him. I was for days utterly incapable of the least exertion of body or mind, and so I lingered on.

“When I got better I carved some little ornaments in wood, which he sold at a town ten miles off, and in this manner I endeavoured to defray my own expenses, but very inadequately, I fear. The generosity of that man, his daily and hourly acts of self-denial for my sake, were more heroic than I can describe. He affected a timidity which did not belong to him, and all he asked me in return for his manifold sacrifices, was patience to await my deliverance, and not to risk discovery by any rash precipitancy. This was not for himself, but that I might not prematurely run into the lion’s mouth. I was grateful to my heart’s core; but I was burning to obtain tidings of my friends, to give news of myself to my brethren. At last the opportune arrival of a pedestrian party, among whom I recognized a fellow student, placed the means of a journey at my disposal. This friend obtained a passport

for me under the name of Hilderich Trübner, a travelling artist, and I reached Trieste. From thence, with great difficulty and many precautions, I arrived in Venice, to find that my family had left it four years previously, and nothing was known of them. This blow again prostrated me, but I resolved upon making the search. With infinite difficulty and delay, and numberless obstacles, I at last found myself on the road to Rome; and you know the rest ——” he sank back.

“What an experience, and what suffering!” said Mrs. Wentworth.

“It is enough to make one a fatalist,” he replied: “in the best formed plans of escape from prisons some slight accident ruins the whole, and after every precaution is taken, one fails helplessly. My escape was unpremeditated, and succeeded in spite of the greatest difficulties. I must say, to the honour of mankind, that I never needed a helping hand but it was held out to me; and my heart, which had become chilled and well nigh paralyzed during my

imprisonment, regained its health in this intercourse and dependence on the rudest phases of human nature. The worst consequences to be apprehended from imprisonment are not of a physical or mental, but of a moral character: a kind of marasm of the heart: " he covered his face.

" My dear friend," said Mrs. Wentworth, kindly, but utterly incapable of appreciating the deep bitterness of these recollections, " do not think of the past. Thank God, it is all over; you are out of the power of these wretches now, and your future life will go smoothly."

Mrs. Wentworth forgot, or did not know when she thus stigmatized them, that the set of persons in England to whom she belonged were the staunchest supporters of the system which upheld " these wretches."

" And now that I am better, I must burden you no longer. I must find——"

" You must find no one, but, as I said yesterday, remain here till my uncle returns."

" Did you make the inquiries, I asked? "

" Yes."

“ You heard of Moroni ? ”

“ There is a family of that name, but they are absent from Rome at present.”

“ I must wait, I see, till I can go myself.”

“ It will be best, and till you are well I will not even ask your true name.”

He bowed, for he was too exhausted to discuss the point at that moment.

The recollection of suffering gone through is sometimes so vividly acute that it upsets an imaginative mind and delicate frame even more than the reality. When the danger comes, one goes through it step by step, gradually becoming inured to endurance and resistance ; but on recalling it, the whole weight seems to fall at once and crush the sufferer.

It would have been curious for a cynic to have observed the effect of the narrative on the listener after the object of her cares had retired to rest.

She stood with a candle in her hand before the large cheval glass in her room, and contemplated herself from head to foot—thoughtfully at first, and then as if satisfied. When she sat down

again to her evening occupations, there was a light in her eye and a colour on her cheek.

“I will write to Godfrey,” she said; “I will not mention that this is his friend, but I will ask him to come and see me. He shall meet him in my presence. It is a good card to hold, at all events, and will bring me nearer to Godfrey than anything else. I will keep my invalid here a few days longer, and then he shall search for his friends, but not till he has seen Godfrey.”

To shorten, even by an hour, the anxiety of his friends, if they were in Rome, would have seemed but the natural sequence of all her kindness to the Spielberg prisoner; but in the one case her benevolence did not come in the way of any of her plans, in the other her miserable little designs as regarded Wentworth might have been thwarted. And on the success of this she was bent. So mingled are good and evil elements in such characters, and so fatally (inextricably connected with each other as we are) is the destiny of one human being too often gambled away to further the wretched designs of another!

CHAPTER IV.



THE day Wentworth half carried, half supported Imogene to the window, was an epoch in the lives of the three individuals in the Via Sant' Onofrio.

"How beautiful!" said the poor child, as she stood up and looked for the first time at the view below, and saw athwart the dark trees the great dome of St. Peter's.

Tears of joy sprang to her eyes, and she stooped her head and kissed the hand which supported her.

"Do not tire yourself, Imogene," said Agnes, who started as if she had been stung.

Imogene looked out for a few minutes, and then returned to her couch. Agnes, by a strong effort, recovered herself.

"My precious one," she said, "you must be careful, the least imprudence might lose all we have gained."

"If you only knew how thankful I am," murmured Imogene. "I could scarcely believe that I should ever be able really to walk again! and yet I feel so strong and so well! When I think how strangely ill I felt last week, and that now suddenly a weight seems taken off my heart, and that I feel not only stronger, but happier, I am beginning to hope again that I shall recover. Last week I was in despair; but if I continue improving so rapidly, in three or four months more I shall be quite well, Herbert, and then——"

Imogene's blush and the sudden fall of her voice told what her words had left unsaid. She smiled and turned to her listeners. Agnes was as white as her dress. Wentworth looked strangely flushed and agitated, but on neither face was the sympathetic joy she had a right to expect. A chill, an alarm, which made her turn faint for the moment, struck her with a doubt whether

her own senses were not playing her false. She half raised herself, and looked again.

"Oh, Agnes, am I deceiving myself? shall I never get well?"

"You will get well, my dearest," answered Agnes, seriously.

"But why, then, do you both look so sad?" she interrupted Agnes, almost impatiently.

"Remember," said Wentworth, slowly, "that you have been very ill, that one only measures the extent of your improvement by the recollection of the peril you have escaped, and give us credit for a feeling too serious for smiles."

His grave voice had always a great influence over her, and she allowed herself to be convinced, and in a few minutes was again occupied with her favourite occupation of modelling. Wentworth rose, and without trusting himself with more than a passing glance at Agnes, left the sisters.

Later in the afternoon Mary brought her work, and Agnes at last escaped to her studio.

For a few minutes Agnes sank down on a seat

with her hands pressed tight over her eyes; but after awhile she rose, and stood before her easel, as if she would have worked at it; but there was a fire in her brain, and a tumult in her heart, which forbade any sedentary occupation. She felt she must have air, and she had a burning desire to see Moroni. At all hazards something must be done, something positive ascertained about Herbert. She resolved to go to see Giacinto and to send Egidio to Moroni.

If she only knew that Herbert were in truth dead, it seemed to her she would have less misgivings; she would wait patiently till Imogene was quite well, and then break the truth to her, and part for ever from Wentworth. The ground she stood on seemed to heave beneath her feet with the sudden sharpness of the pain she felt at this idea. "If Herbert were *not* dead?" Ah, there were difficulties on every side. She almost wished she had never seen Wentworth; yet how much did they not owe him? He was not to blame, whatever occurred. She only was the responsible person. She had done evil, that good might come.

How earnestly she prayed that the evil consequences might fall on her alone!

She entered Giacinto's house with calmer feelings than when she had left her own home.

Giacinto, still looking a little pale, and walking rather weakly, was playing in the vicolo. When he saw Agnes he rushed with a brightened face to her.

"Is your father at home?"

"Signora, si."

"Will you tell him;—nay," she said, "I will tell him," as a dark face and scowling brow showed itself on the threshold——

"Egidio, I wish to see Signor Moroni as soon as possible. Can you go to him for me? Could he meet me to-morrow in the church of Sant' Onofrio?"

"I will go to him. My master will be delighted to obey the signora's summons," said Egidio, with that look of mingled ferocity and obsequiousness which Agnes so disliked.

She turned away coldly. Giacinto began chatting to her. He told her he was well, and asked when he could recommence his sittings.

He confided to her how kind the Signor Pittore had been to him, having paid for the sittings for which he was engaged, although he had not been able to fulfil his engagement; and his prattle and caresses so occupied Agnes, that she was unmindful how the time passed. He soothed and, as it were, consoled her.

The innocent affection of a child is like dew to a worn and wearied spirit: it is so spontaneous and impulsive. Humiliating though it may be to our self-love to think it, children and animals are the only creatures who can bear the weight of a great affection bestowed on them. They may become exacting, but they reciprocate with entire single-heartedness the kindness shown to them; they rarely disappoint, and never betray.

When Egidio returned, a softer expression came over his face, when he saw, through the open door, his child and Agnes in close conversation, and the child's face, full of pleasure and love, upturned towards her.

He approached her gently, and said in a more respectful manner,—

"I have sent him word, and you shall hear to-morrow morning, for he is still at Frascati; but I have no doubt he will meet you to-morrow evening."

She rose immediately and took leave of Giacinto.

"When can I come?" he asked, anxiously.

"He is not well enough to walk to my studio, is he, Egidio?"

"Nay," he said; "I think in a few days he will be quite well."

"He shall rest if he comes; well, then, Giacinto, in a week. You can come next Monday."

"To-day is Monday:" and Giacinto ran over the days to himself. He could not make them shorter than the inexorable week; but it was something to look forward to, at all events.

He watched her as long as he could, and she once turned round, and seeing his little figure at the end of the street, kissed her hand to him.

"It is strange," thought Egidio, "the two persons I love best in the world, my master and my child, adore that woman, and to me she is

antipatica, ma antipatica; I cannot understand it. It will do us all a great wrong, I am afraid, for it is not natural."

Agnes walked home, resolved that she would make one final effort to ascertain the truth about Herbert. Even if she threw herself on the generosity of Moroni; even if she went to Spielberg herself, leaving Imogene with aunt May, a definite certainty *should* be attained. There was a relief in looking forward to an end. And till the truth about Herbert could be ascertained without a possibility of doubt, nothing could be decided upon.

Her head throbbed with the continual ebb and flow of these thoughts; and as she walked through the long reach of streets towards her home, she tried to force herself to observe the external world around her, to escape from the maze of confused and perplexing fears, anticipations, and regrets, which crowded on her. Her artist nature, with its quickness of perception, aided her in this.

It was about three o'clock. The day had been

unusually hot, though it was yet early summer, and the Romans were still enjoying their siesta. Rome wears its most peculiar aspect at this hour. The pause of life in the little green-shuttered houses of a Swiss or Bavarian town, has something quaint about it, resembling a fantastic incident in a fairy tale; but in a mediæval city such as Florence, or an amphitheatre of ruins like Rome, it does not give the idea of sleep, but of death;—it is not repose, but desertion. In the grander parts of the city, the silence casts a deeper gloom on the ruins, for the blaze of sunlight reveals the defacing hand of Time with uncompromising truth; and the more squalid streets display their hideous secrets with cynic effrontery, as if they defied and braved the searching light.

A stranger can better judge of the fast increasing decay of Rome while the streets are thus empty, than when a gaudy and picturesque population swarm through them. Nature here and there, with her cunning devices, seeks to veil the uncomeliness around, with her profuse festoons and draperies of leaf and flower;

but amid the garish daylight this pathetic contrast does not conceal the ugliness. Yet perpetually on crumbling casements, where broken windows are mended by rusty iron or soiled paper, one sees, amid the inevitable rags hung out to dry in the golden air, some huge earthen jar or vase of classical shape, containing a tropical cactus-leaved plant, or a vine has been trained round it, and drops its long tendrils from story to story with generous luxuriance. An artist rejoices in the scope which such effects give to his art; but the philanthropist sighs. The picturesque aspect of ruin does not atone in his eyes for its debasing and retrograde consequences.

As Agnes was descending the stately steps which led from the Trinità de' Monti to the Piazza di Spagna, she witnessed an incident and saw a group which impressed her as a type of the condition of Rome. All the usual models had retreated from the scorching heat; the so-called Padre Eterno and Judas Iscariot had retired to a doorway, and were playing at cards; the Magdalen and Bambino were asleep

in the porch of the convent, and the Madonna was combing her black locks as she was waiting for some *faggioli* which were to form her midday repast. Old Beppo had disappeared, and not a shadow fell on the broad flight of stairs but Agnes's own. But beside the last step, and curled up so as to have the advantage of the narrow shade from it, lay a beggar boy sleeping profoundly. His cone-shaped hat, with the carnation twisted round it, had fallen off, and his features were visible. Though wasted and stained, they bore the stamp of Italian beauty. The long thick eyelashes, and the delicate modelling of the lips and chin are almost always remarkable, and give to the features a look of refinement which no rags or filth can efface. But there was also an air of thorough idleness and of premature experience in that boy's countenance, which was as suggestive as it was offensive.

Agnes paused for a minute. No woman could have looked at the forlorn lad without compassion. At the same moment, some hasty steps came

towards the stair. It was a priest and a Swiss soldier talking earnestly. The priest looked at Agnes with sidelong eyes, and then at the boy, as he passed up with a stealthy step. The Swiss, who seemed excited or intoxicated, stumbled over the step as he turned towards it, and with an oath and a kick, which effectually woke the sleeper, followed the priest. The boy was on his legs in a moment, and there was a flash of rage in his eyes as he looked after the two; but after muttering with the quick humour of his country,

*"Piccola pietra gran carro riversa,
Piccola scintilla può bruciare una villa;"*

he lay down again and was asleep in a moment. As Agnes crossed the Piazza, the vindictiveness of the boy's look recurred to her again. There is such mingled expression of strong will and of stolid expectation in those dark Transteverine eyes!

"Beggar, priest, mercenary, what can be done with such elements?" and Agnes thought of Herbert, and of the many others, the flower of

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of the burning bush roused the great heart of the deliverer of Israel.

A divine hope and a divine despair filled Agnes's heart, as she pondered on these things: a hope that the march of events would tend to public regeneration;—a self-abnegating and resigned despair that perchance the advancing chariot wheels must crush many private hopes and joys.

On reaching home, she found that Imogene, tired from the exertions of the day, was sleeping on her couch. Agnes looked at her flushed and happy face, and then closed her own eyes, as if she would shut out from herself the fear of the change which would take place in that girlish beauty, when the truth should be revealed. Had Wentworth loved Imogene, the truth might be delayed, even if Herbert were dead. Was it selfish of her to recoil from such a possibility? Had she not once given up her loved one to this child? Was she weaker now? did she shrink as a coward from the pain she knew so well? Agnes gazed again on her sister, who seemed disturbed in

her sleep ; a look of the elder Imogene's—wistful, discontented—which Agnes knew well, clouding the brow which had hitherto been so serene.

Agnes clasped her hands together tightly ; an abyss of pain in ever-widening circles seemed opening before her : yet Imogene and Wentworth must be happy—of that she would make sure.

“ Dearest,” said Imogene, who woke at this moment, “ I felt you were near me ; I have had such a happy dream. I was at the Grange with Herbert ; I know it so well by your description ; he and I were walking on the beach ; you were not with us, but when I looked I saw you far away across the sea, appearing thin and wan ;—you were in mourning, and held a palm branch in your hand. It was at such a distance, and you could not come to me ; but your face seemed quite peaceful, though it was very pale.”

“ You are tired to-night, Imogene,” said Agnes ; “ so your dreams have been sad.”

“ Not exactly sad, but strange. How could I be at the Grange, or anywhere else, without

you?" and the rosy lips of Imogene were pressed on the soft hand of her sister.

Agnes returned the pressure silently, but a vow was recorded in her heart.

Wentworth had been as much disturbed as the sisters by the words of Imogene, when she had alluded to the future. He walked in the alley of cypresses in his villa, till morning, reflecting on them. Marriage with Imogene was impossible to him, who loved Agnes. That was clear. Yet he might as well stab that poor child with his own hands, as shrink from what was the only natural end of the drama he had acted. And Agnes, what was it told him that, in spite of her gentle coldness, she would suffer too? Must she be called on to sacrifice her own heart again, that her sister's happiness might be accomplished?

What trifles sometimes come into our minds in the very midst of a great anxiety or a great sorrow! Wentworth mechanically thought of the little toy he had seen Imogene modelling. She was copying in coloured wax the carved

group in the centre of the room — the panther reposing after she has killed the antelope. There was something horrible yet fascinating in the idea that so had been this lovely creature Imogene, in her calm and cherished repose, the destroyer of her sister. So, in a figurative sense, might Agnes be said to be lying prostrate at her sister's feet, pouring out her life's life, defenceless from her own gentleness.

It was terrible to think one of the two must be sacrificed. A rude wakening from this dream of felicity would destroy Imogene. On the other hand, there was Agnes—Agnes whom he loved. But did she love him?

Wentworth threw himself on a seat, and covered his face with his hands.

There is a theory broached by a celebrated female philosopher, that a ray of sunshine is magnetic, and that among the chorded colours which form the ray, the violet has most power. This reminds me of love. If it is true love, and the heart a true heart, a reciprocal feeling must be perceived by both lovers. And more

especially is this the case when the love is tinged with sadness—when in the golden light there is the violet ray.

Wentworth felt that Agnes loved him; and as he thought so, the marriage fragrance of the orange and jasmine came wafted to him by the night breeze, and the tinkling of the water in the stone fountain of his garden dropped a sweet music on his ear.

CHAPTER V.



THE church of Sant' Onofrio is in one of the quietest and most retired spots of Rome. No one can have sat on that convent platform without being freed for a moment from the anxious cares and tumultuous emotions of life. It is so sad, so beautiful, so serene! The recollection of that noble heart, which after life's fitful fever sleeps there at last, gives a sanctity to one's thoughts. Tasso, the knight, the poet, the lover, is the spirit of the place. The vicissitudes of his life come home to us here, where the conflict ceased for ever,—where the tardy triumph gave its crown to the death-bed, and where glory was won when glory was but an empty name!

What a spot to die in: here you may overlook

a city of tombs and memories, amid which it were not hard to die. The simple epitaph,—

“TORQUATI TASSI OSSA,”

is all that the tablet tells of the genius, the chivalry, the sorrow buried here. Here where these passed away—confident hearts may learn humility, repining ones, patience.

To Carlo Moroni, however, the associations of the place were dumb. His gloomy dark eyes expressed only a fierce determination, as they were turned to the ascent by which Agnes was to come. When he saw her he hastened to meet her.

“I obeyed your wish, Signora Agnese,” he said, when they both stood side by side on the height, “but I have heard nothing since I saw you last.”

“You heard nothing at the Coliseum the other evening?”

“Nothing new; the fact was stated that he had escaped, but had not since been heard of; and some suspicion was aroused.”

“If Herbert has escaped I know he would

report himself instantly ; he may have sunk under the fatigues and privations he has had to endure."

"There is a man who knew him at Venice and Turin—a German of the name of Edelberg, who has a brother also imprisoned at Spielberg. This German might know something of Herbert, for he has constant communication with the North. Edelberg lives at Frascati, at the Villa Nelli. He is a misanthropic, soured man, for he has sacrificed everything to our cause, and has not met with gratitude or consideration from our chiefs. His wife is suffering from a nervous complaint, brought on by their anxieties, and is, I believe, dying. They live in a strange retired manner, yet is he the only person who may have heard of Herbert."

"But you come from Frascati yourself?"

"Yes, but he may have heard since I left—at any moment."

"Is there no other means?"

As Agnes raised her veil in the anxiety of the question, the fading light revealed how much thinner and paler she had become.

A sensation of malignant pleasure stirred in Moroni's mind. "None," he answered.

"Could you inquire of him?"

"I cannot leave Rome for a few days, but he would see you. I will write to him."

"Thank you."

"You do not fear going alone?"

"No; besides, I may find some escort as far as Frascati. I shall go Thursday or Friday."

"Do you know, Signora Agnese, there is an Englishman here who is the image of Herbert Tremorne?"

"You told me you had never seen Herbert?"

"I have not, but those who have tell me so."

Agnes turned cold, but hastened to change the conversation.

She has suffered—is suffering, was Moroni's thought; she will soon have to look to me as her only comforter. "I should say," he resumed, "there were no means of ascertaining the truth about Herbert, if I were speaking to others; but to you I cannot say so, for I know what a blow it would be to you?"

"The truth is best."

"A journey to Spielberg, a residence near the fortress, by which gradually some knowledge might be acquired of the interior, though fraught with danger, to an Italian especially, might, however, be managed."

"How?"

"I scarcely know yet, but less practicable things have been done on weaker motives. For me, I acknowledge two paramount forces, Italy and——"

"Italy!" interrupted Agnes. "Yes, surely, it *would* serve Italy; it would be essential to the liberal party. Publicity should be given to the names of the victims."

"Sooner or later that will be done. But we do not want wordy tributes to the martyrdom of our best and noblest; we need bayonets,—daggers. If certain men, whose very existence is an offence to the free, were swept off the earth, we might then hope; but there seems to be a moral cowardice in all; we are frightened by names. The same act is called assassination

when it touches a crowned head, and justice, if inflicted on a poor man."

Moroni gnashed his teeth.

"It is murder in both cases if life be taken."

"Does society call it by that name, when thousands, ay, hundreds of thousands, perish in order that the ambition of some despot may be pampered; or when a poor wretch, who thinks that nature has given him a right to live, breaks simply some of those laws which the rich have made to oppress the poor, and is then judicially tried and gibbeted? Does not society call the first glory, the second law? and yet is not the one wholesale murder; is not the other legal assassination? For the lives now slowly rotting away in their infamous prisons, is there no debt which rulers must pay? By certain tribunals they are already judged and condemned."

"I am convinced that if every crowned foe of Italy were swept off the earth, Italy would be no whit the freer. The pressure from without is successful only in proportion to the hollowness that is within." (Agnes had talked too much to Went-

worth not to be convinced by his opinions.) "I always hear of vengeance, but I do not see a single resolute stand for the smallest reform."

"Signora, patience is eminently an Italian virtue. We shall get rid of Austria, and then——"

"But you will never get rid of Austria by the dagger. You have got to deal, certainly, with brute force, but a brute force which represents an idea. The possession of Italy by the Austrians is a protest which the reactionary party of Europe made against the ideas promulgated during the French Revolution. While most of the governments of Europe are inspired by these dogmas, a partial resistance cannot avail.* The pen at the present time is far more effectual than the poniard. Ideas succumb only to ideas. A liberal policy must annul the treaty made by retrograde statesmen."

"But our ideas are embodied in our acts: our poniards represent them."

"Then they are not ideas, but passions. Herbert always regretted that part of your system."

* Such words were uttered many years ago. Cavour had not then undone the work of Metternich.

"And he suffers for the mildness of his opinions," said Moroni, sarcastically.

Agnes clasped her hands.

"He has——O God! if I only knew the truth——"

"Signora, I said there were two motives which would impel me to dare the difficult task of going to Spielberg myself—Italy and love." Moroni was for once led away by a generous impulse; he spoke quickly, and his whole face and figure seemed transformed into a nobler and better expression.

"Love!" said Agnes, absently, for her thoughts were far, far from her companion.

"Yes, if any sacrifice of mine could avail, would I not gladly offer it to win the love of the woman who is, I think, dearer to me than Italy herself? There is nothing too difficult, nothing too arduous, nothing too irksome which I could not achieve."

Agnes looked at him keenly with her clear, calm eyes.

"And do you think by giving your blood,

your health, your life, you can win love? You may obtain gratitude, but love is free, unpurchased, and unpurchaseable. Your service may win acceptance, but do not claim love in return for it. God help you if you love in vain. Men have no pity for it, and the loved one least of all."

She was always so calm and undemonstrative, that this outburst of feeling surprised Moroni, and affected him. But she recovered herself in a moment, and, drawing her mantle close round her, prepared to leave Sant' Onofrio.

Moroni was taken by surprise, and paused for a moment. It was only for a moment, for he was at her side before she reached the foot of the hill.

"Do you misunderstand me, signora?"

"Misunderstand you!"

"Yes; do you mean to say, you do not know that I speak of *you*—of my love for you?"

"Me! Love for me!"

Agnes stood breathless with astonishment, so unfeigned, and evidently sincere, that it mortified Moroni to the quick.

"I have loved you," said he, with a dignity very unusual in him, "from the first moment I saw you—during these four years, when I have been permitted to be of some slight service to you; I love you as I never thought to love woman; my respect equals my love. I love—do not interrupt me; you must now hear all—I love your genius, your goodness, your noble character, your love for my poor country, for art; I love all the manifold beauties and excellences which I never dreamed before could exist in this poor world; and yet, till I saw you, I thought no one knew women better than I did, but you are unlike any woman I have ever seen!"

"Love me!" repeated Agnes, and she wrung her hands in despair.

"Why not? Why should I not love you?" Carlo's good angel was taking its flight. "Is there any reason why I should not? Does your English pride revolt at the idea? You know you are all as proud as Lucifer; but what divides you from my love? Are we not of the

same flesh and blood, that I should be insensible to attractions such as yours? This surprise is unworthy of you, and unworthy of myself; you cannot have been unconscious of a devotion which I have never sought to disguise. Put me to any proof you will, you shall find that my love is as profound as it is passionate; and that if you only give me hope, however distant, you will have made me as happy and as grateful as I am faithful and adoring."

He put out his hand, as if he would have taken hers, but she recoiled slightly.

"Have you done? Will you hear my answer?"

"Speak; but I warn you, my temper is not a patient one; do not drive me to despair; if you make me your enemy——"

The faintest shadow of scorn darkened Agnes' face at these words.

"One who really loved would not be so soon turned into an enemy; I have less regret than I should otherwise have had in telling you——"

"Beware," he said; "think of Herbert," and

he strode up so close to her that she could almost feel his hot breath upon her cheek.

——“that at no time,” she continued, with icy calmness, “could I have reciprocated your feelings; now, least of all. Farewell.”

She turned from him, and went on quietly in appearance, but agitated and alarmed to a most unheroine-like degree.

“Signora Agnese,” said the hoarse voice of Moroni, who had overtaken her, “is this all? Do you really intend that all intercourse between us two should end here?” He put his hand on her arm.

At this moment they had to step aside. They had not heard the bell which had been ringing for some minutes, announcing the procession bearing the host to some dying person, and the crowd following filled up the narrow street. Agnes and Moroni stepped into a *portone* which was open, and let the crowd pass. The dim light of the lamp which swung above fell on Agnes’ face, and Moroni saw how pale and worn she looked. With a rapid change, he altered his tone.

"Forgive me, I have pained you; I have spoken abruptly when I ought to remember how many anxieties you have; but when I thought of going to Spielberg to search for Herbert, and that the chances were I should never see you again—for the peril is great—I could not bear the thought of dying without your knowing my secret. Will you forgive me for Herbert's sake?"

"There is nothing to forgive," said Agnes, wearily.

"But if I go to Spielberg, and if I return, will you not promise then?"

"Not even for Herbert's sake can I encourage you in hoping I can ever give you anything but gratitude. God knows, I would lay down my life this moment for the sake of knowing with certainty his fate; but truth is truth; I cannot hold out to you hopes which I could never realize. Be generous in your turn."

"You wish me to go, then?"

"Not selfishly for my sake alone; but you said it would serve your party."

Moroni's face was black with concentrated passion as he spoke.

"How should I know him if I saw him?"

A strange suspicion had darted through his mind.

"He is tall, fair—with a light moustache and beard; eyes like mine."

The crowd had passed on, and they stood at the entrance of the portone.

"Tall? fair? with light beard and moustache?"

As he spoke, the tall figure of Wentworth passed them; his profile was clear against the evening light: he was walking towards Agnes' house.

"You have deceived me," said Moroni, seizing her wrist roughly. "Ha!" Agnes could not repress an involuntary start. "Who is that man that has passed? You do not answer!" He held her to him in spite of her struggles. "Swear to me he is not Herbert, or——"

"I insist upon it, leave me," said Agnes; "you have no right to question me thus."

"You have deceived like a woman—like what

they all are. You wish to get rid of me, while your lover, Herbert, is here. Tell me that man's name, or——"

Agnes had at length freed herself; her indignation had given her the strength required. She at length stood panting, exhausted, but free before him; she paused one minute.

"You have insulted me," she said, "past forgiveness; and that you may one day regret having done so, I swear to you that that man is not Herbert Tremorne."

She flew, rather than walked, the rest of the way. When she reached the door of their apartment, she found Mary just entering after Wentworth. She asked him to go with her to the studio, and, for the first time, gave him an account of her meetings with Carlo Moroni. She did not tell him all the particulars of this last interview; but there was enough of knowledge of human nature in Wentworth for him to feel that some crisis must have taken place in the relations of the Italian and Agnes. His indignation knew no bounds, but he kept it to himself.

He thanked her for her confidence, and told her that he would call on Moroni, and ascertain his intentions as regarded Spielberg. It was imperative that some one should go.

"He told me at the commencement of our interview, that there was a German at Frascati who knew Herbert, and who might have means of knowing him. He is one of the same society, and he proposed that I should go."

"To Frascati?"

"Yes, to the Villa Nelli."

"Aunt May was proposing a drive to L'Ariccia the other day. You could go with her, or rather we could go with her, for I shall not trust you two without some escort."

"Let us go the day after to-morrow, Thursday. On Monday Giacinto comes, and, besides, it is Imogene's birthday. Shall it be so?"

"Very well, I shall expect you and aunt May to call for me, and take me with you. Meantime I will try and find Moroni."

"How kind you are!" murmured Agnes; it seemed so strange to her to be taken care of.

It touched Wentworth to the heart to see how she felt it. It was such an unconscious proof of such a lonely existence. All the chivalry of his nature was aroused to surround, with a tender and careful love, the poor life which had stood so bereaved and deserted hitherto. They had lapsed into a deep silence;—one of those silences in which, according to the old legend, there is a flutter in the air of angels' wings, which foretels either fruition of hope in this life, or consummation of joy in another.

CHAPTER VI.

WENTWORTH at an early hour the next day, which was Wednesday, called upon Moroni. In the dullest of houses in the Piazza Sant' Eustachio, Moroni and his family lived. According to the patriarchal mode usual to Italian establishments, father, mother, two married sons, and their families, together with Carlo, all resided in one house. Most of the family met at the eleven o'clock breakfast and at the five o'clock dinner; but all the rest of the time was spent in their separate rooms, at their different pursuits. No one member of the family interfered with the other; of course there was entire ignorance of Moroni's whereabouts, and Wentworth had to wait in the *sala* for a quarter of an hour while the servant inquired if Signor Carlo was at home.

He had time to scan the chairs as they stood in stiff array against the wall; the high-backed narrow-seated settees arranged in the corners; the dusty artificial flowers on the marble console, flanked by tall silver "*lucerne*;" and to notice the small bit of turkey-carpet under the marble-topped round table in the centre, before any one entered to answer his inquiries.

At last the door opened, and an old gentleman shuffled in. With a thousand compliments and an infinity of the politest excuses, he said that his son Carlo was out; indeed, he had not returned home since the previous evening. Was there any message he could transmit to him from the Signor Inglese?

Wentworth bowed, and said he would try to find him another time. He asked some questions which he thought might lead to a betrayal of some knowledge of his son's occupation, but met the politest confession of ignorance.

He left the house, and paused half way down the street, while he was thinking of the next step to be taken, when he saw that the house-

door he had just left, opened to give passage to an old lady in a half-mourning, half-conventual garb, who glided through it, and, looking neither to the right nor the left, entered the Church of Sant' Eustachio, which was precisely opposite. An impulse he could not define, led him to follow her, and he entered just as she had reached one of the side altars. Wentworth saw her kneel down, and with the saddest and most humble look prostrate herself before the shrine.

He heard her murmur "*Santissima Maria,*" and then utter some prayer which was inaudible, except when, with passionate and reiterated vehemence, she exclaimed, "*per il figlio mio, per il figlio mio.*"

Evidently the mother of Signor Carlo saw reason to beseech Heaven for her son. In every line of the pale wan face care and anxiety were printed in most touching characters. How many wives, mothers, daughters in Italy looked like this, and prayed the same appealing prayer through all these long years! Whatever might be the ignorance, feigned or real, of the father,

the son had confided in the mother. She knew he was in daily peril, and it was here she came to seek comfort for herself and help for him.

Wentworth waited till she rose, and then approaching her gently and respectfully, asked for the honour of a moment's conversation.

She turned pale, but with the courtly grace of an Italian lady begged him to speak.

"I am very anxious to have an interview with your son, Signor Carlo Moroni."

She looked at him from head to foot.

To reassure her, he added,—

"I wish to speak to him of a mutual friend, Herbert Tremorne. Can you remember that name? Stay, I will write it." And he gave her a slip of paper with the name written on it.

"My son is absent, I do not know when I shall see him myself."

"If he returns to-day, will you give him this paper, and tell him I will call."

She bowed, and seemed impatient to leave

him. Wentworth touched his hat, and they parted.

On his way home, he made up his mind to one resolve. He would go to Spielberg himself. He would seek Moroni, and inform him of his resolve, or, if he could not find him, acquaint him with it by letter. He would leave Rome as early as possible in the following week, and would tell Agnes of his determination only just before he put it in execution. Every engine should be put in motion to discover the truth. If Herbert had escaped alive, he would never cease his search till he had discovered him. If Herbert were still in prison, Wentworth, with no romantic impulse, but in a calm and resolute spirit of self-sacrifice, was determined to free him, even at the cost of his own liberty. Their resemblance would facilitate this, and once out of harm's way, Herbert should convey the news to Wentworth's friends, when his release would assuredly follow. If not—he was prepared for any contingency; but Herbert should be saved.

He went to his studio, and began arranging

his drawings and books. The purpose was so full of risk, that it was with something of a farewell glance that he looked on all the collections heaped up around him of his favourite objects of pursuit in Rome.

He wrote a letter to his uncle Marmaduke, and in it he expressed his regret at their estrangement, and told him that, as he was bound upon a difficult and perhaps dangerous enterprise, he would confide to him his last wishes and bequests. All his property which was not entailed, he left without reservation to Agnes and her sister. If he succeeded in the purchase of the Grange, it was to be settled on Agnes. If any accident happened to him, no unusual steps were to be taken, and his death was to be told to Agnes by aunt May. As the expedition he went on was secret, no letters were to be forwarded. He wrote a few lines to aunt May, and a letter to Agnes was enclosed in it—a manly, touching farewell, which revealed to them alone the mystery of his fate.

All his arrangements were made when he heard a knock at the door, and then female

voices in altercation with his servant. He had given orders to admit no one.

After a murmuring dialogue of some moments, the visitors left, and a note and some flowers were brought to him. The flowers were tuberoses and sweetbriar; with the scent of the latter, a rush of English memories came to his mind. The note was in these words:—

“MY DEAR COUSIN,

“Could you come to see me in four or five days from this date? I have much to tell you, and some things to explain. I am willing to take all the blame of the past, but for the future let us be on the footing of relatives. I have something to tell you, which will interest you if you come to see me.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“MILLCENT.

“P.S.—You need not answer. I shall expect you on Wednesday.”

The pointed, delicate writing, the scented note-paper, the flowers, gave his memory a shock,

and he was suddenly in the midst of the past. The sudden blow which had completely changed the current of his life was again felt. Oh, what a road he had passed since then! Through how arid an Arabia Petrea to the Arabia Felix, in which he now stood; and now he was going willingly to offer up his life, which love had endowed with such hopes, desires, for the contentment of the one truly beloved! If the worst tidings should come—that Herbert had died in his attempt to escape—the certainty even of such a catastrophe would be better for Agnes than her present fearful doubt. For all the duties and sacrifices which might then arise, he was prepared. Come sorrow, come separation, what could countervail the blessed fact that his love belonged to Agnes, and that through all vicissitudes that immortal gain was his: he had had the privilege of knowing her and of loving her.

Never had Wentworth felt so deeply the responsibilities of life, never did the pageant of a man's active career in public (serving his country, and in serving his country's best inte-

rests, serving mankind in all countries) shine more brilliantly before him than now. He held the future in his grasp, as it were, and counting the cost, laid it aside. Amid these generous and lofty thoughts, the last sting of resentment towards Millicent was effaced. He drew some paper to him, and wrote these lines:—

“On Wednesday I shall have left Rome for some time, but these words will tell you, should we never meet again, that I forgive and forget all. Under all circumstances, I hope you may be happy.

“GODFREY WENTWORTH.”

He addressed the letter, and put outside, “To be sent on Tuesday.”

Millicent, as she glanced at her mirror before sending the note, and saw that her eyes were as blue, her hair as glossy, her figure as lithe and graceful as in the former days of their young love, had been satisfied that if she could herself meet Wentworth, she would have obtained a decisive victory. She had sent up the note, for

she required no immediate answer to that, but was determined to see him after he had read it ; so she waited in the street, with her maid, and walked up and down till he should leave his studio, which, of course, he did at the usual hour that artists generally dine. Her pretty lip slightly curled at the notion of his artistic occupations ; but she was resolved to wait.

Her heart trembled a little, for years had passed since they had met. She had had one bitter letter from him, and then all communication between them had ceased. She was like all small natures, forgetful of the wide proportions a wrong takes in more retentive memories : not in the way of vindictiveness or animosity ; but that when once a person is convinced that the wrong done by another proceeds not from a fault, but from a vice, the gulf between those persons becomes wider and wider with time. At first we are too agitated to know precisely the extent or nature of the injury ; but when the process of healing has commenced, we can tell whether the scar will be indelible or not.

With Wentworth, the bitter pain which Millicent's treachery had caused him was sufficient, after a time, to dispel the enchanting veil which had been thrown around her character by her beauty. The fiery influence of sudden temptation had called out the hidden characters of the page, and he had found narrowness, deceitfulness, cold-heartedness in a disposition which had veiled these defects under the most caressing and charming manner. The reaction was proportionate, and its effect lasting.

People talk of forgiveness! the bitterest injuries, committed under the excitement of some passion which sweeps everything before it, can be pardoned, I admit; but when the wrong received is much slighter, but proceeds from some radical and inherent defect of character, then it is not in human power to replace the offender in his former relation to the person injured. Trust is for ever broken.

While Millicent was pausing on the threshold of the house, her attention was attracted by a lady coming down the street towards her, from

the Piccio side. She passed so close, that Millicent had to draw her silken skirts around her to keep out of her way, as she entered the very house in which was Wentworth's studio.

Agnes, for it was she, was, alas! unconscious that the woman she had brushed by, held in her hands the fate of both Wentworth and herself; but Millicent was instantly aware that this was the Signora Agnese, of whom Laura Carmichael had spoken and written. Millicent never forgot anything. There was nothing, however, in the aspect of this rival which could for a moment excite her jealousy; and as it was still early for her evening drive with her invalid, she waited.

Agnes entered Wentworth's room hastily; she was always admitted. Wentworth was startled: it was like the apparition of a goddess on the altar where a sacrifice was to be offered to her!

"I have come for a minute," she said, "to tell you that we shall be an hour earlier to-morrow, in order that aunt May may be able to retire early.

She will spend Thursday evening and all Friday at L'Ariceia, while we go to Frascati; and we are to return very early on Saturday morning. Moroni had sent me word the Edelbergs expect me on Friday morning. Can you spare so much time?"

"Certainly."

"In what disorder you are here! it looks as if you were packing up."

"I am arranging some things. Let me walk home with you."

Agnes looked involuntarily round the studio, and the picture never afterwards faded from her mind. There were some fine pictures on the walls; but framed, just above the desk at which Wentworth habitually sat, hung, usually, the little sketch of the "Perseveranza," which he thought so like her.

It was placed now on the desk, as if for removal. In a niche was that imperial bust of "Grazia," with the splendid outline of head, and magnificent contour of face, which gave a royalty of beauty to the poor "puella Capriensis." On

the table were heaps of sketches by Wentworth himself. In all was a certain beauty, and force, and ideality.

Wentworth did not share in the growing taste for ugliness, by way of copying nature, which was beginning to be the fashion of the day : that reaction from the love of conventional and academic beauty which is quite as fatal to inferior artists.

Through the large open window, no longer shaded by its curtain, the stairs of the Trinità di Monte were seen ; beyond the opposite houses was the sea of roofs, which spread, curling like tawny waves, at different heights, till they met the jagged outline of the pine-covered hills. Far on the horizon a narrow line of copper-coloured light showed where the sky and sea met. On the right was the mighty Dome, already in shadow, while before it stood the great angel on Hadrian's tomb, bearing the sunset on his wings.

On the table were some flowers ; Agnes took them up mechanically.

"No, not those," said Wentworth, and he

snatched them so hastily, that the thorns of the sweet-briar hurt her hand slightly.

"Take this," he said; and he gave her a piece of orange-blossom from another glass.

As Agnes took it, a drop of blood from the finger into which the thorns had pressed fell on it.

"Were I superstitious," said Agnes, smiling, "what a bad omen this would be!"

They left the studio. So absorbed were they both, that they did not see the person who drew back into the shade as they passed. She saw them both distinctly—the flowers in Agnes' hand, and the expression of Wentworth's face. Millicent acknowledged that she was defeated. She must now weave another web.

Agnes and Wentworth spoke little. Wentworth's heart was full, and he feared to speak, lest he might betray himself. He had resolved not to do so till the last day.

They walked along towards St. Peter's. The stars were coming out one by one in the sky, which was yet luminous with the setting sun; the caged

nightingales, that are so often hung in little wicker prisons at the barred windows of the poorest houses, had begun their soft gurgling notes ; and now and then an errant firefly waved its tiny torch before them. It was a real southern night, all song and flame !

They entered St. Peter's, and Agnes rested for awhile on the bench which is opposite the Tomb of the Stuarts. The gentle beauty of the Angels which guard the gate of the Tomb, rendered so spiritual in their shining whiteness by the approach of night, gradually enchained the thoughts of Agnes and Wentworth. O magic power of Art, what a consoler and sustainer art thou !

They parted at the entrance of the Via di S. Onofrio. To Agnes this evening's walk, with all its pauses and turns, was sacred for ever.

Wentworth hastily returned to his studio, took out the sketch which resembled Agnes, locked it, and went along the Via delle Quattro Fontane towards his house. He passed the Piazza Sta. Maria Maggiore, with its statue of the Madonna above and the washerwomen rubbing

their linen in the waters of the fountain below, and smiled at the continual juxtaposition in Rome of the lowly and the sublime. He paused, and as he did so, a gentleman passed and bowed to him. It was his Italian friend—the gentleman he had met at Mrs. Carmichael's, and who had afterwards saved his life in the Coliseum.

"I am very glad to have met you; I wished to speak to you, and was so vexed that I did not keep your card and address. Can you give me a moment's time?" The Italian spoke eagerly and anxiously.

"I am rather hurried."

"I must speak to you; it is best I should not take you to my house or go to yours; but I have just come from the same place where I met you the other night; the meeting is dispersed, and it is as good a place as any other for us to walk. Come!"

Wentworth complied. They first entered the Coliseum and traversed that part of it in which are the fourteen oratories, each dedicated to a scene in the passion of our Saviour.

The Italian seemed nervous and constrained.
At last he spoke :

"I have serious reasons for asking you the question, so pray excuse its seeming abruptness : what is your opinion of my countrymen, Signor Inglese?"

Wentworth smiled, but answered frankly,—

"I think that, like the Celtic races, there is a preponderance of what may be called the theological over the moral virtues in them."

"That is, you grant us almsgiving, patience, good-nature, but deny us the virile qualities of truth, self-respect, and firmness."

"I will tell you why I have formed this opinion. I am an artist : I have studied the faces around me ; I see in them a roundness and width about the temples, a quickness of eye which gives a peculiar vividness to the expression of their countenances ; but this appearance is coupled with a shallowness in the forehead and upper part of the skull, which denotes the superiority of the imaginative and perceptive over the reasoning qualities. Their eyes are good, but their mouths are coarse."

"The mouth is certainly the loveliest feature in the human face. Animals have fine eyes ; but the mouth is the distinguishing human trait."

"It is the earthly part of the intellect which therefore, I think, looks out of the eyes, the spiritual part which is displayed in the mouth. It is from the mouth that emanates the word, and it is the word which is God in us."

"And, therefore, blind people are capable of more education than the deaf and dumb, for no written page makes up for oral communication. So be it; but I think you take too high and too low an estimate of us. There is a greater energy in us than is generally suspected, and an indestructible vitality, so to speak. The plant Man shares the force and redundancy of nature here ; and as they have no worthy scope for these qualities, the Romans bring a power into their passions and into their intrigues which is unknown to other nations. This conversation is less irrelevant than you may think. May I ask why, knowing us as you do, you have so imprudently excited Moroni's enmity?"

"I really was not aware I had deserved that honour; but I scarcely think it is of any consequence. Was it to tell me this you sought me?"

"*Caro mio*, men like him remind me of the tiger—they have periods of sanguinary ferocity, and periods of repose; when filled to repletion, the animal sleeps in the sun and seems inoffensive: but beware of him! I cannot understand the design of the plot, but he seems resolved to take you for Herbert Tremorne, and if he can make others believe the same—I cannot explain what I fear yet. I entreat you, do not go out late unarmed or in lonely places. I have spoken to our chief, but the laws of our association are stringent, and Moroni's proofs overpower mine."

"I am very grateful to you for your warning."

"Which is, however, a useless one, as I see by your tone."

"The fact is, I cannot compliment Signor Moroni by taking precautions unworthy of myself. In fair fight I am more than his equal,

and even an assassin would not find me an easy prey; but there is one defence I can offer, which is, that next week I leave Rome in search of this very Herbert. Till Saturday I am at Frascati. He must murder me on Sunday or Monday, if he seeks to do so."

They had left the Coliseum itself, and were now walking in the small grove of acacias which wave their bright verdure near the Arch of Trajan. They soon parted, and Wentworth walked quietly to his home.

He was one to whom the physical sense of fear was not even known; and his mind and heart were tempered as steel by his resolute and determined character. He meditated, though, upon what the Italian had said.

When he reached home, he wrote a few haughty lines to Carlo Moroni, announcing his intention of going to Spielberg immediately—in fact, on Tuesday next. He mentioned that Herbert Tremorne was his most intimate friend, and that as, through Herbert's cousin, Miss Tremorne, he had heard that Signor Moroni had been

deeply interested in obtaining news for her from Spielberg, he had thought it right to apprise Signor Moroni of his intention. He added that he took advantage of this opportunity to inform Signor Moroni, that any communication he had to make to Miss Tremorne prior to Tuesday must be addressed to him (Godfrey Wentworth), as Miss Tremorne had requested him to act for her in this matter, and that after that date Miss Tremorne would be content to seek no further information, but had resolved to await his (Wentworth's) return. It was a polite but firm dismissal, and Wentworth knew Moroni would so understand it.

It was now morning, and near the time for their expedition to Frascati. He rose and dressed.

CHAPTER VII.



THEY drove out of the Porta San Giovanni. Aunt May was well wrapped up, amid her air cushions; Agnes sat beside her, and Wentworth opposite. They were very silent, for aunt May, like all invalids, felt weak and exhausted during the early part of the day, and the other two were afraid of tiring her.

The day was beautiful, and that mournful repose which is so peculiarly the feature of the Roman landscape was less oppressive in the clear morning air. The exquisite flora of the Campagna bloomed luxuriantly on each side of the road, and the plain, with its sudden sweeps and bold mossy mounds, looked gay with beauty and life. The air was clear as liquid crystal, and

was as a draught of wine to Agnes, who for so long had lived without change. In Rome there is an ecstasy in the mere sense of life, to which even the heaviest hearts are not insensible. There was something pathetic to Wentworth in Agnes' enjoyment. To a generous nature nothing appeals more forcibly than this appreciation of simple pleasures, which by more luxurious persons are lightly prized. When Wentworth saw the effect of the "common air and skies" on Agnes, he felt a tenderness for her which gave an unwonted softness to his every look and word.

They reached Albano, and rested and dined there. The rose-garden of the hotel where they stopped was a feast to sight and smell, and there was a colour even in aunt May's pale cheek, as the exquisite fragrance embalmed and vivified the air. In the afternoon she was to drive, and Agnes and Wentworth were to walk, to L'Ariceia, where they intended to stay the night.

Agnes and Wentworth turned off from the main road after the carriage had passed them, and walked slowly onwards. The breeze was

loud in the Chigi woods, through which their path led, and its evening voice sounded melodious poems in their ears. The intense, teeming force of nature, manifesting itself in the closely-entwined, prodigal foliage—in flowers that were quaintly profuse in their luxuriance, like the wonders of an Eastern tale—was almost suffocating; as if mortal life were too frail and poor to resist the riotous and oppressive vegetation around. Behind, in the sunset sky, the “terrible purple” of the clouds seemed as if the wings of a mighty Archangel were guarding a golden paradise, while our two travellers were penetrating deeper and deeper into the dark wilderness which lay before them. Toiling upwards, at length they reached the little piazza of L’Ariccia. At the time we are speaking of, the noble bridge which now spans the ravine had not been built.

There is something very imposing in the little piazza of L’Ariccia. On the left side is the Duomo, opposite the large iron gates which lead to the Chigi Villa; and in front of the low parapet commanding the wooded valley, is a row of cheer-

ful-looking houses, the central one of which is an inn, called "Le Rendezvous des Artistes." In this inn our travelling party were to pass the night.

In summer the English, French, American, and German artists go to L'Ariccia for the sake of its pure air and exquisite scenery. They are boarded and lodged for a trifle, and they spend a kind of merry, perpetual picnic during the whole season. The drive had been a pleasant one to aunt May, but she retired early, somewhat fatigued by the motion of the carriage.

Agnes nominally followed her example, but instead of retiring to rest sat by the open window of her room. She was lost in thought, and unmindful of the noisy laughter, the smell of smoke, and the clatter of glasses. It was supper-time, and Wentworth, at her request, had joined the motley set below, and she was alone.

She had lived so long alone, that it was strange how much more so than usual she felt when he closed the door and bade her good-night.

Different as was the scene—the lofty, narrow room with its frescoed walls and bare brick floor,

—from her home at the Grange, she was yet carried back there in thought, and wondered with a mournful self-compassion at the vicissitudes which had brought her from thence to where she now was. The tears which, unconsciously to herself, dropped on her hand, roused her, and she felt that she must think no more.

Sometimes the recollections of the past are like that mournful inscription on the hours over a Spanish sundial: *Vulnerant omnes, ultima necat* ("All wound, the last one kills"):—but to dwell thus upon them is not compatible with a healthy state of mind. Agnes rose, and looking for the last time on the moonlit piazza, and on a figure walking up and down there, whom she recognized as Wentworth (who had been soon satisfied with his experience in the supper room of the inn), she hastened to undress and go to bed.

The next morning at five o'clock, two ponies were at the door, and Agnes and Wentworth prepared for their ride to Frascati. According to Moroni's request, his friend M. Edelberg would receive Agnes and communicate to her whatever

information he possessed. Aunt May was to enjoy the air of L'Ariccia and the repose of a quiet day: she had brought books and work with her to beguile the time of their absence.

They went through the imposing little gate of L'Ariccia, and ascended towards what is called the upper gallery. This is a high bridle-path, skirting the lake, with trees meeting overhead almost uninterruptedly. The thought in the poet's verse, though not then written, was in Wentworth's mind as they moved slowly beneath the sweeping branches, and looked down on the turquoise cup below them :—

“What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree
The instant made eternity;
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride.”

Through these overhanging branches, the view was one of unparalleled beauty,—embracing on one side the vast natural terraces which form the gradations between the Alban and Tusculan mountains, with here and there a deep intersecting

pointed to a door which led to the interior of the house. Here another servant met them, and they followed her up a steep narrow staircase, through interminable corridors, which seemed to branch into contradictory passages, to the ante-room, which led to the apartment occupied by M. and Mdme. Edelberg.

The house had been chosen evidently for its facilities for secreting any persons who wished to communicate with its present inhabitants. It might have been occupied for months by fugitives at one end, who would be entirely unknown to persons living on the other floors; and with connivance from those within, these fugitives might enter and leave the villa, without being seen at Frascati at all, as there were passages which led a long way below the hill, and which opened into the road some way from the gates.

Agnes expected every instant to see the dark face of Moroni come out of the passages to meet her, but he did not do so; and then she concluded he must be watching her unseen from some hidden spot, and wondered what he would think

of the presence of Wentworth. Yet she felt no fear, there was an abiding sense of protection in her heart, and a dim, strange presentiment that she was at the end of the perplexity and anxiety which had so long tried her.

The blaze of sunlight from the enormous windows of the saloon almost dazzled them; but while they were waiting for M. and Mdme. Edelberg (Agnes had sent her name by the servant who had conducted them), they had time to examine the room. There were antique busts ranged on marble stands between the windows and round the walls, all very much dilapidated; but, though mere fragments, they were fine as to modelling, proportion, and expression. One or two were less damaged, and, in spite of cobwebs which formed a softer veil than her marble one, the grand, impassive features of a vestal, near the seat which Agnes had taken, would have been the treasure of any collection. Here, accident only had brought two persons capable of appreciating the severe serenity of her beauty, and years and years might pass,

before any other human being would admire it again.

"There is something very touching to me," said Agnes, "in coming suddenly upon one of these neglected works of art, in some obscure spot, unknown, uncared for, abandoned—wrought with so much skill and genius, triumphing over time, and yet missing the object for which it was created—that of giving pleasure."

"Yes; but when we *do* meet with it, the pathos mixed with our admiration makes it more impressive. Few monumental statues have struck me more than the one attributed to Donatello in the Certosa Monastery, near Florence. It is a recumbent figure, placed on the floor of an underground chapel, before the high altar. It is in the same attitude in which the bishop, whom it represents, was, at his own request, laid to die. The chapel is rarely used, and seldom opened, except to show it to strangers. Majestic, beautiful, and calm, the corpse, which is dust below, is not more alone than that statue, and yet the artist, who knew precisely for what he worked, abated not a

jot of care or thought, and produced as noble a work of art as if it were to be raised on a pedestal in some public thoroughfare for all to applaud."

At this moment they were interrupted by the entrance of M. Edelberg.

M. Edelberg was a young man. His beauty was remarkable, but it was the beauty only of form, for there was something unpleasant in the restlessness of his eyes, and the weak sadness of his mouth. He shuffled as he walked; and this fact struck Agnes, for his figure was tall, well-made, and indicated strength, but his walk was feeble and uncertain, like a child's.

"It is very good of you to come so far to see us."

"We were told you might give us information about a relative of mine," said Agnes.

M. Edelberg looked sideways at her, then at Wentworth. He started when he looked at the latter.

"News of Mr. Herbert Tremorne?" and for a moment his eye was steady as he looked at Wentworth.

"Exactly so."

"Will you come to my wife?" said he, suddenly, as, after having conducted them through two or three large desolate rooms, he opened the door of another smaller one, which had more traces of habitation.

The "*persiani*" were closed, and it was nearly dark; but it was cool: and a faint smell from some odorous essence gave an artificial sweetness to the air.

Madame Edelberg rose to receive them. She was very tall and slight, dressed in a loose white wrapper, which displayed still more the tenuity of her frame. Her small head looked smaller than it was, from the long slender throat on which it rested, and from which it drooped, and the dark hair drawn entirely off the face made its thinness and pallor still more visible.

It was a pretty face, but looked like the face of a mere animal. Some moral instinct or rule seemed wanting there, and in moments of exaltation or excitement it was evident that the inferior nature which resides in us all would in her become un-

governable. At present it was perfectly still, and mournfully languid.

She received her visitors kindly, and placed Agnes on the sofa beside her. It was covered with white, as well as all the furniture in the room. There were no flowers, no books, no sign of occupation, only a small piece of crumpled music-paper twisted in the lady's hands as she spoke. A few notes were written on this paper. There was something wonderfully oppressive in the nudity and cold whiteness of the room.

"You must be tired," she said to Agnes.

"Oh, no; there is something so soothing in the air, that I quite enjoyed the early morning ride."

Madame Edelberg sighed deeply.

"I will show you the view from my window; it is considered a very fine view, I believe."

They left the two gentlemen conversing, and, opening a window, she invited Agnes to step out on the terrace with her. Agnes clasped her hands, with an exclamation of wonder and delight.

The platform on which they stood was part of a large terrace, built in the shape of a crescent. The room they had just left opened on one of the horns of this crescent, and commanded a view of the whole Campagna, with St. Peter's, which looked like the hull of a vast ship, dark against the sky. A rich marble balustrade, as daintily carved as a piece of guipure, edged it, and gave the terrace an air of delicate magnificence. In the centre and broadest part of the crescent, a huge fountain, in the worst possible taste, and in the most ornate architectural style, displayed all its pomp of mutilated Naiads and fragmentary Tritons, looking in quaint contrast with the slender jet of water which trickled into the fern-covered basin.

The place and its inhabitants seemed matched in their desolate ruin and faded beauty.

"How beautiful!" said Agnes.

Madame Edelberg smiled.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, I can understand now what people mean by being intoxicated with the beauty of such

scenes. One passes into a phase of feeling which would be unintelligible to those who have not witnessed such things. Paganism has a meaning comprehensible to me now. A sensation like this gives one the measure of a worship, which must have been too universally impulsive and sensuous to be limited to the invisible, and which must have had such irresistible temptations to deify and adore the visible."

Madame Edelberg looked absently at her companion.

"I am too shortsighted to see it. The only object in that scene the sight of which I can enjoy is this."

She moved to one side of the platform, and pointed out a small enclosure at the foot of the ravine, which was surrounded by cypresses and planted with flowers. It was the village cemetery.

"How prettily they adorn it, do they not? I watch those wreaths every day. I sit here in the morning and the evening, and I see nothing else."

Agnes trembled.

"You must be lonely here."

"Lonely? oh, no; my husband is always with me."

This was said, however, as spiritlessly as the rest of her conversation.

"Have you resided here a long time?"

"Two months, I believe."

"How long do you stay?"

"I do not know. Monsieur Edelberg knows."

"But are you not too delicate to spend the summer in this climate?"

"I am always well." She placed her hand on that of Agnes; it was quite cold. "I am always well, unless—unless——"

At this moment a distant voice, clear and monotonous, but sweet, was heard singing far in the wood,—

*"Fior di Castagna,
Venite ad abitare nella vigna,
Che siete una bellezza di Campagna."*

Madame Edelberg started up and listened; her face changed, and the light of insanity sparkled in her eyes; as the voice died away, she sank

down on her knees, straining to catch the last echo of the song, clinging to the edge of the platform, yet hanging entirely over it.

"The pain is here now," she said, raising one hand and touching her temples; and large tears, as large as from the eyes of a wounded deer, poured over her cheeks.

Agnes was startled, but did not lose her presence of mind. She raised her companion, who had now closed her eyes, unconsciously repeating the air she had heard, and supporting her back into the room placed her on the couch.

Monsieur Edelberg seemed to understand in a moment what had happened to her, and, requesting Agnes and Wentworth to leave the room for a minute or two, informing them that his wife was subject to such attacks, began bathing her forehead with a refreshing essence.

Agnes described to Wentworth, when alone with him, what she had witnessed.

"I think," he replied, "that I have heard before of that kind of insanity. She has one of those delicate organizations which certain things affect

in a manner that more evenly balanced temperaments find it difficult to conceive. Her husband was just telling me that music has been a passion with her, but she has been obliged to give it up entirely. Even hearing it excites her too much. But by resigning it, her life seems to have been emptied of its vitality, her being of its soul. Without any positive cause of illness, she is wearing away."

"And her husband?"

"He is a singular being also. In him, too, is a strong vein of madness. The political intrigues in which he has passed his life, the disappointments and deceptions he has endured, have evidently unsettled his mind. He is passionately in love with his wife, morbidly conscious of her precarious state, and yet ignorant of what to do for her. To me his manner is most strange. He evidently mistakes my identity. He thinks I am Herbert Tremorne, or rather suspects it, asks me the most searching questions in answer to my demands for information about Herbert, seems for the moment satisfied with my replies

and then suddenly returns to the same doubts and distrust. He has told me twice that I must know as well as he does that Herbert has escaped from Spielberg, and when I have asked whether he could trace him afterwards, he said: 'Whatever motives there may be for this masquerading, it will be repented of. You will have to render an account to honest men for this double-dealing.' It is no use waiting here; we shall get no information. For some object or other, Moroni wishes to thwart you in your inquiries, and he has so confused this man, that, even if he knows anything, which I doubt, it is impossible to discover what is fact in his contradictory statements; but I feel that he has been impressed with the idea that I am Tremorne."

Here M. Edelberg returned and apologized for having left them.

"Is it absolutely necessary that you should live here?" said Agnes. "I should think the solitude and the climate too exciting for a person with nerves so weak as Madame Edelberg's."

"Possibly; but it is not exactly a matter of

choice, and she suffers in most places. One note of music is enough to bring on a nervous attack. The silence of this spot seemed a recommendation; where could we be so quiet, but in a prison? Spielberg, for instance? What do you say?" He turned to Godfrey.

"I know nothing of Spielberg," replied Wentworth.

"*Che!*" said Monsieur Edelberg, "why do you try to deceive me?" And again the roving eye looked fixed for a minute. "What object can you have? Because I am a miserable man, whose heart and brain have both been strained beyond their powers, do you think I have no memory? Did I not see you both in Venice?"

"Monsieur Edelberg," said Wentworth, calmly, "you know you never saw me at Venice: my resemblance to Tremorne is great; but not such as to deceive, after the first moment, a sane person."

Monsieur Edelberg looked angry, and his eyes wandered over the room; but he was silent.

"As, however," continued Wentworth, "our inquiries for Tremorne have not been successful, we will not trespass further on your time, but will take leave of you at once."

"Do wait, we shall dine shortly."

Both Agnes and Wentworth declined. They went in to say farewell to Madame Edelberg. She seemed quite recovered, and rose to accompany them through the gardens to where the ponies waited. She was not paler than before, and, but that her hands trembled, no one would have guessed what an agitation had overwhelmed her half an hour previously.

They all then descended the stairs which led to the other entrance, and which, in shallow, but interminable flights, reached the ground-floor on the other side. Through the court they went under the arched entrance to the formal garden, and then opening a small side door, entered on a path which led beside an artificial piece of water to the farthest gate.

The flowers were in neglected profusion all round, the last year's autumnal leaves still strewed

the ground, and formed a soft carpet for their feet, giving out, as they trod on it, a dank, moist, earthy smell, almost intolerable, and in dispiriting contrast to the sense of present summer, with which everything above and around them was impregnated.

Madame Edelberg spoke little, and her husband was quite silent, as he gathered some exquisite flowers, and gave them to Agnes. His wife seemed to dread the contact as much as the smell of a flower, and held her flowing dress closely round her. Now and then some pebble, displaced by their feet, fell into the water and disturbed for a moment the stillness of the place, otherwise they were as mute as a funeral procession. Little did Agnes conjecture that this walk, watched, unknown to her, by Moroni, was indeed the burial of her brief season of hope. He had hastened the day after he had seen her to Frascati, wishing to learn who would be her escort. The moment he saw them arrive, his resolution was taken. Edelberg's morbid mind was always brooding on treason and traitors; the

resemblance between Wentworth and Herbert, aided by Moroni's suggestions, was quite sufficient to confuse him ; and his report to the heads of the society, coupled with Carlo's, would be fatal. An escaped prisoner from Spielberg, who had not reported himself, but lived under another name in Rome, was naturally an object of great doubt and suspicion. At length they reached their ponies. While Wentworth helped Agnes to mount, he did not perceive that Edelberg gave a paper to one of the men who had held the horses. At the same minute Madame Edelberg, bending timidly towards Agnes, murmured,—

“I like you, you are very kind ; I will give you this.”

It was the crumpled paper with the musical notes on it.

They set off. On looking back once they saw the tall figure of their hostess watching them, her hand shading her glittering eyes. Her husband had already turned his steps homeward.

“I am glad it is over,” said Wentworth. “I think nothing can be more painful than asso-

ciating with persons in a state like theirs. Positive madness is less fearful to contemplate. The perpetual tax on one's own mind, not to touch the diseased part of theirs, is enough to injure it and confuse one's own perceptions."

"I can imagine nothing more melancholy," said Agnes; "but the wife, if she lives, will overcome her present delicacy and recover the equilibrium of her mind, but not the husband."

"What makes you think so?"

"Hers is only an overstrained sensibility, his is a perverted conscientiousness and a diseased self-love. I have rarely felt more affected by the sight of actual misery than I have this morning, where there is no tangible unhappiness to sympathize with."

"Yes, I can imagine nothing sadder than *her* fate, loved, loving, surrounded with the most exquisite beauties of nature, perishing in the midst of them; consumed by a vain desire for another sort of beauty, which appeals to another sense, and which she is forbidden to enjoy. That unappeased thirst for sweet sounds must be like the

mal de pays, which breaks the heart and turns the brain of the exile. And, moreover, to me," added Wentworth, "there is a superstitious feeling which ever lingers round any association with mad persons. It has been twice predicted to me that I should be destroyed by a mad person. I smile at such prophecies, but I instinctively recoil from insanity. Do not look grave; we shall never see these persons again."

They spent the afternoon at Grotto Ferrata, and did not return to L'Ariceia till late in the evening. They dismissed their horses within a mile of the gate, and walked the rest of the way.

As they had just passed from the shadow of the trees to the moonlit road near the gate, they heard the sound of a tambourine, and saw three or four peasant girls dancing. There was no actual beauty in their large heavy forms, but the enjoyment had something barbaric and picturesque in it. They harmonized well with the vivid landscape; and the long green tendrils and large vine leaves, which crowned their dark hair and girdled their waists, adorned them as

fitting Dryad figures to fill the picture. There was something fascinating and alluring in their step and action.

Gradually more and more joined the number. Wentworth, to amuse Agnes, and to divert her mind from the serious thoughts which their visit to the Edelbergs had excited, told her an anecdote which well illustrated the changeful organization and impressionability of these southern natures. Looking out of the porch of a rude inn in the Abruzzi, he had once heard an old blind beggar play a merry tune on his fiddle. A girl was coming up the path with a parcel in her hand. First her head kept tune, then her feet, till gradually she could resist no longer, and was fascinated into dancing. All who passed that way were influenced, though more rapidly, in the same manner, and before an hour had passed there were twenty villagers dancing on the green, who continued dancing till they dropped down tired and powerless. It was quite a picture of the old barbaric Paganism.

Agnes' artistic sense was roused, and she paused

to look at these village girls and fix the group in her mental eye. This wild, free, happy grace was in healthy opposition to the melancholy thoughts which their morning visit had left in them: this antique vision was the seal of their strange day. When they reached the inn, they found that aunt May had retired.

As Agnes and Wentworth lay down to rest that night, the thoughts of both turned to each other as hitherto they had never done. In spite of the disappointment about Herbert, and a kind of ominous dread of the future, which Monsieur Edelberg's strange conduct had excited, at the bottom of each heart there was an unavowed feeling which sweetened all. How entirely had the emotions of the day been shared by both! Wentworth had answered Agnes almost before she spoke, Agnes had read Wentworth's looks and replied to them. Perfect sympathy is so rare! It does not always exist in the purest love, or in the most fervent passion; but here it was without a flaw—an entire and perfect chrysolite.

The next morning came, bringing back with

it the daily routine of thought. The Agnes who rose was a different being from the Agnes who had gone to rest. Can it be, that in our sleep, the dark Angel of our destiny lays his seal upon us, causing us to awake with care and anxiety, however buoyant we may have been with hope on the preceding night?

While Agnes was dressing her eyes fell on the bit of music-paper Madame Edelberg had given her. Between the notes were scribbled these words: "Beware of Carlo Moroni. He is here, and has been here for some days. He goes to Rome to-morrow. He insists that Herbert has deceived him, and that he will be avenged—but who is Herbert? My husband swears you are Herbert, but Moroni has compelled him to think so. My husband says that Moroni knows it for certain. Beware! there will be wrong, I know."

She took the paper to Wentworth: but both came to the conclusion that it was but another proof of the excited state of Madame Edelberg's mind.

"Poor woman!" said Agnes, "how I wish I could think of her as likely to live in a more congenial sphere! How I wish I could be of use to her! I will try and see her again."

It was not to be. A twelvemonth afterwards, in the churchyard on which Agnes and Mdme. Edelberg had gazed from the garden of the Villa Nelli, an additional tomb might have been seen. It was surmounted by a plain marble slab with only initials on it. A few bars of Schubert's "Addio" were carved below them. "*La mort est une amie qui rend la liberté.*" It was the last resting-place of Mdme. Edelberg. Her husband had left Frascati immediately after her death.

When aunt May left Agnes at her own house, she told Agnes that she was going to see Millicent on Tuesday.

"I shall come and see you afterwards, my dear; but I am troubled in mind because I have not been to see her yet. I must go, for Marmaduke's sake. By-the-by, Laura tells me she

is really most kind to the poor invalid they picked up in that extraordinary way."

"Is he well now?"

"Not entirely so; but I believe he has been out driving a few times. Laura has not seen him yet, however."

"Good-bye, dear aunt May; on Tuesday then? I would come to see you on Monday, but it is Imogene's birthday, and I devote it to her."

CHAPTER VIII.



ON Monday Giacinto resumed his sittings, and at ten o'clock he was duly stationed in the studio. He had washed his face, combed out his long brown curls, and stuck a carnation in his round felt hat, which was his idea of making a toilette.

He was a very pretty boy, not so much from regularity of feature as general beauty of countenance. He had a broad full forehead, on each side of which his hair fell in long thick curls, and his eyes were large and bright, and set wide apart. The dark eyelashes gave them an expression of great sweetness as well as intelligence. His mouth was well-cut, though somewhat large, and his teeth were white and even. The profile was not so good as the full face. There was a peculiarity

in his features such as one sometimes sees in the faces of children not destined to live till manhood; an entire completion, as it were, of the infantine beauty. There is no room for the growth of the flower in that symmetrical and finished bud; or rather the flower itself has bloomed prematurely, and must fall from the stem. This expression always gives a peculiar interest to the face on which it is seen.

There was something precocious in every way about Giacinto. His early associations with artists, and the insensible effect of listening to their conversation and witnessing their habits, might have produced this in some respects. An extremely sensitive organization was another reason. His love for Agnes was something extraordinary in its depth and exclusiveness, and some would have smiled and some would have sighed in observing it.

He had brought her some lovely flowers, and his cheeks glowed with delight as she put them into water, and placed them where their rich fragrance could be enjoyed by her.

He then took his accustomed seat and chatted away to his heart's content, while Agnes painted. The child's prattle soothed her. She was for the moment in one of those moods of discouragement which sometimes prey upon the best balanced minds. At times we call them presentiment; but they are just as often the after-swell subsequent to a great storm as the shudder of the wave which is the precursor of it. With the best disciplined nature there are momentary regrets and rebellion, when the thorns which we all feel prick more sharply than usual, and when the blood-drops more freely and visibly gush forth.

Imogene was rapidly recovering, and, pleased as Agnes was, she trembled as the time approached when some revelation must be made. After a while, the child perceived that his friend was thoughtful and somewhat absent, and gradually his flow of talk subsided. He remained silent, watching the cloud on the brow he loved so dearly. The sunny silence of a Roman noon was filling the room with a voluptuous repose, and, rendered drowsy alike by the heat and the

stillness, the child fell gradually lower and lower in his seat, till his head sank back on the arm of the chair, and he was asleep.

Agnes had gone on painting so mechanically that at first she had not observed this; when she did so, she was more than usually struck by his peculiar beauty. She took up a blank sheet of paper and began sketching him in this attitude. It was so like Agnes not to disturb him, but rather submit to the inconvenience of this break in their sitting.

While doing this carefully and assiduously, she suddenly heard the door open, and, to her infinite astonishment, saw Imogene, leaning on Mary's arm, enter the studio.

"Imogene!"

"Yes, dearest: I have found out the studio at last. No, no, I will not wake him," she answered to Agnes' sign, pointing to the sleeping boy. "How delightful it is."

Mary looked at her mistress deprecatingly.

"Miss Imogene would come," she murmured.

"Yes, I would come; I felt so well this

morning. It is my birthday, and I was resolved to celebrate it. I walked first to the door of my room, and made Mary bring me here. It is very shabby, however, Agnes,—I wonder at you.”

“It does very well, my darling.”

“And this is all your own work. How beautiful! How clever you are, dear Agnes; let me stop and watch you while you paint.”

“As long as you like;” and Agnes resumed her sketch.

But Imogene’s patience was not to be tried; for a few minutes afterwards, Wentworth arrived, and, instead of going into the sitting-room, was brought by Mary into the study. This interruption was sufficient to change the current of Imogene’s volatile thoughts. She turned to him with delight, proud of this new proof of convalescence, poor child! and telling him she felt she must celebrate her birthday by some still greater pleasure than even this her first journey through the house.

“Let us go into the other room, and no longer

interrupt Agnes," said Wentworth kindly, seeing that Agnes was really in the midst of a most spirited sketch, though the subject of it awoke just as the lovely apparition left the room.

"Good-bye, Agnes, then, for a little while. Come, Herbert."

"I will."

Wentworth lingered a moment.

"You do not look well, Agnes; are you tired?"

"It is nothing."

"Herbert, Herbert," called the musical voice of Imogene.

"Go to her, I will come presently."

"Here is that book of poems I was talking of the other day."

"Thank you."

Wentworth put his hand with a caressing motion over hers as he gave her the book and left the room.

Agnes sat with the book in her hand lost in thought; at last she roused herself from her reverie, which seemed a very sad one, for she sighed heavily, and murmuring the name of Her-

bert twice, put down her book, and, looking at her little model, found his eyes fixed upon her with a questioning surprise, which sent the blood to her cheeks.

"What a beautiful lady!" said Giacinto, wonderingly. "She is like the Madonna."

"She is my sister," said Agnes, slowly; "but do you know, Giacinto, you must not speak of having seen her in my studio? For reasons you are not old enough to understand, it is my wish that you should do as I tell you."

"I will obey you, dear signora; but is the *pittore* your brother?"

"No," and again Agnes blushed. "He is a very dear friend; but now let us get on with our work."

The sitting was again interrupted by Wentworth.

"Imogene says that she is quite resolved, Agnes, that you shall celebrate the day in some manner. I think it is only right that you should indulge her. She is a little tired with her unusual exertions, but she wants you to go

out, either for a drive in the country with aunt May, or to some theatre in the evening."

"Not for a drive," said Agnes, "for I do not wish to lose so many hours away from her this morning. I will go to the theatre, if she wishes it."

"Which shall it be?"

"Is there not an afternoon theatre? I think I have seen the placards in the street. I will go to that; for then I shall be home soon enough to begin my work early to-morrow, as I have lost a good deal of time to-day."

"Let it be so, then; we will go to the Mausoleo d' Augusto."

"Yes, and I will finish now; Giacinto looks a little pale and tired."

The sitting was terminated, and Agnes dismissed her model. Whether she was still occupied with her own thoughts, or whether the fact of the child's question had a little startled her, it would be difficult to say; but Agnes was somewhat cold to him as she kissed and bade him good-bye.

Giacinto felt it. Children are the most sus-

ceptible of creatures : a tone, a glance, a gesture is observed and felt by them. Instead of his usual prattle all the way home to his father, who had fetched him from the Via di S. Onofrio, he was silent and a little pettish.

“What ails the lad?” thought Egidio. “Are you tired, Giacinto? shall I carry you?”

“Yes.”

He lifted him up on his shoulder and carried him home.

When they reached the house, Egidio put his son down, and beckoning to his wife, who was knitting and talking to a neighbour, whispered to her—

“Find out what has vexed the child.”

Giacinto had gone to the little shelf where he kept his treasures, and had taken out one of his books and was looking at it.

Santa came slowly in.

“*Cuore mio*,” she said, in her softest voice, “there is your soup. I have kept it warm for you. Are you hungry? you look pale.”

Giacinto looked up at the unwonted mildness

of his mother's voice. That fierce, coarse woman would have made a good actress. Her whole face was changed.

Having put one knitting pin in her loose dark hair, and the other in her waist, she prepared Giacinto's frugal meal. The child looked longingly and yearningly at her. His little heart was sore, and the instinct in it made him long for some compensating tenderness which would serve as sympathy.

"Are you going to the Signora Agnese to-morrow?"

"No; she did not tell me."

"And the English *pittore*?"

"No, I saw him to-day; he did not say anything."

"You saw him to-day?"

"Yes; he is a great friend of the signora's, and I saw him with her and with——" the child stopped.

"With——?"

He would not disobey Agnes, so he said, to change the conversation,—“The English *pittore*

and the Signora Agnese are going to the theatre in the Mausoleo this afternoon."

"Ah! What do you call him, that *pittore*?"

"Signor Herbert, they called him."

"They?"

"The Signora Agnese."

Egidio, who was smoking carelessly on the threshold of the door, heard all this, and resolved to impart it to his master.

Santa came up to him. She had not got over her resentment towards Agnes, and thought she had a sure key to Moroni's generosity.

"Signor Carlo thinks the English lady is like a Madonna, but she is like all of us. That Englishman is her lover, and she has another—an older man,—who wanted to see her the other morning at ten o'clock. I told him they were all out. He looked very unhappy indeed."

Egidio listened and quietly knocked out the ashes of his cigar against the door-post, reflecting whether the occasion had not at last arrived when it became necessary to open his master's

eyes. But he never conversed freely with his household: he listened, gave his orders, and held no further communication with the inmates of his home.

When Giacinto saw his father throw away the end of his cigar and prepare for going out, he ran up to him and whispered,—

“I should like to go to the Mausoleo.”

Egidio laughed as he went out, but did not reply. He went direct to his master. By this time Moroni had returned to Rome.

“Your suspicions were correct,” said Egidio; “the prisoner whom you are seeking is here. Giacinto heard him called ‘Herbert’ by the Signora Agnese. She has deceived us all; but M. Edelberg has his lesson.”

Moroni's long-smothered doubt and suspicion flamed into fierce anger at these words, and with it came the most acute pang of all to his strange and contradictory nature. The belief that he had been deceived by Agnes was like worm-wood to him. One of his strongest convictions hitherto had been faith in her immaculate good-

ness and purity. There is a vanity which vicious men possess, in believing that they cannot be mistaken in the worth of whatever they love. The pride of judgment increases in proportion to the decay of principle. Moroni's vindictive heart was roused, and he resolved to be avenged on Agnes and Herbert: on Agnes, for her falsehood and profound dissimulation; on Herbert, for the ill-advised concealment of his presence in Rome. Such deceit presupposed designs of a traitorous character. Had he been permitted to escape on the understanding that he should become a spy on his own party? Through Agnes he might become acquainted with much, and be enabled to betray much. Moroni ground his teeth, and muttered an imprecation. That woman, with her airs of simplicity and modesty, had deceived one who piqued himself on Machiavellian profundity! Mortified pride, wounded affection, which was sincere in its own selfish way, indignant resentment at unexpected wrong—all united to torture and inflame him. The damning fact that Agnes had a lover, whom she

admitted at all times and hours, while to him she had borne herself as a goddess treading on clouds, was as caustic applied to an open wound. He had been overreached in every way; and his private vengeance should subserve his public duty. The society in which he was affiliated, made short work of such treason. If there were any who were lukewarm in such a matter, he would take justice into his own hands. He would strike the traitor in Agnes' very arms, and then the long debt would be paid!

That which seems melodramatic and improbable to us,—who receive damages for a wife's honour, or bring actions before tribunals in order to recover compensation for injured affection,—is a very ordinary affair to the mind of an Italian. He is not only capable of the patient revenge which can wait for years to accomplish its purpose; but the stern logic of "a life for a life" is in full force with him. There is always a terrible directness in his aim: he never stops short. To ruin a man is the first idea of those

who think that external circumstances comprise whatever is worth living for;—but in less civilized communities all things are reduced to their first elements. If a life be robbed of its treasure, a life also must pay the forfeit.

While Moroni was thus occupied, there was a timid knock at his door; even before he had time to answer it, the door was gently opened and his mother stood before him. He rose respectfully to greet her, and placed her in his chair. She held his hand tight in hers.

“Returned! and not a word to me, my son? no matter” (she saw an impatient frown rise on his brow). “I wished to tell you that an English gentleman called at this house yesterday to seek you; you were absent——”

“Well?”

“He gave me this card for you.” She took it from her bosom. “Godfrey Wentworth,—he wished to speak to you. These notes were also left for you. He begged me to remind you of the other name on his card, Herbert Tremorne.”

Carlo took them. One was the brief letter of

Wentworth. He ground his teeth, and muttered,—

“Let his blood be on his head. He shall not leave Rome on Tuesday.”

“Good God! Carlo, what is the matter?”

“Nothing; I will attend to it; but, mother, I am tired—I have been up all night.”

“You want rest, my son. I will leave you.”

“Yes, I feel a little worn out.”

She kissed him, and put her hand upon his brow, as when she soothed him when he was a child.

“You stay here, now?”

“I do not know.”

“God bless you.”

“Mother! Mother!”

It was a fearful cry.

“Let me help you, Carlo.”

“No one can do so.”

“Oh!”

He made an effort.

“Dear mother, I am tired, and I make you as ill as I am. I am now going to rest.”

"When will you come to me?"

"I may be prevented, but I will write to you; you shall hear if anything goes wrong—really wrong."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

The mother and son parted: it was for many a long day; but she trusted in her son's promise, and did not suffer all that she otherwise might have suffered. She knew nothing of his love, of his disappointment, of his intended revenge: she only knew that her son was enrolled among those who were bound together in one cause, the deliverance of Italy. She had enough of the old Spartan spirit "to suffer and be strong," as so many Italian mothers did at that time. She never woke from her dream, that it was for his country Carlo suffered a life-long exile. She erected her idol as so many of us do, but she never discovered that it was made of clay.

Egidio had slipped into the ante-room as Moroni's mother entered, and he returned as she

went away. While the storm of passion was raging in Carlo's breast, Egidio stood before him, as furious as his master, and also revolving in his mind the possibilities of revenge.

When Carlo looked up, he found his faithful foster-brother looking at him with a pity and affection which galled him to the quick;—that an “animal” like that should see him overcome by a woman's perfidy! He rose, but all his efforts were vain to assume the calmness of contempt. His face was lividly pale, his eyes bloodshot and sunk in their orbits.

“Let me kill them, *padrone mio*,” said Egidio, beseechingly; “why should you peril yourself? By the Santissima! I will put her out of the way of doing more harm, and him too. They are going to-night to the Mausoleo.” Moroni started. “It will be strange if I do not find an opportunity there, or on the way to the Via di S. Onofrio. But take heart, Signor Carlo; a thousand such are not worth one pulse of an honest man's heart.”

“Pshaw!” said Carlo, “you are talking about

what you know nothing of. What did you say about the Mausoleo?"

"They are going there to-night. Giacinto wished to go too. He is jealous, *povero ragazuccio*."

"Take him, and I will be there also. Take these notes to Moretti and Cirella."

He sat down and wrote to two of his companions, who were also members of the same party.

Egidio contemplated his own strong hands and brawny arms, and muttered that any extra number of avengers was not required; but he was evidently conscious that silence was necessary in his master's present mood. Though Carlo had not said a word which could surely warrant such a conclusion, Egidio was as certain as if the order had been given that on the coming night a signal vengeance was to be taken. The savage instinct in him had fathomed the fierce desire of Moroni, and it was characteristic of the man that no thought of the consequences to himself mingled in the diabolic satisfaction which he

felt that his master was free from the enchantments of the Englishwoman.

He hastened to deliver the notes, with his hat placed at an unusually careless angle on the side of his head, and with a very fierce twirl of his moustache.

Moroni remained with his head buried in his hands; not swerving from his purpose, but, like all selfish people, absorbed in the recollection of his own wrongs, and recapitulating to himself all the proofs of blind trust and confidence which he had given to Agnes. Perhaps in these hours of torture he suffered more bitterly than his victims ever could. "The wages of sin is death?" The misery caused by evil passions is felt by none so much as the unfortunate criminal himself.

When Agnes had finished her task, she went to her sister's room, and found that Wentworth had left with a promise of returning in the afternoon. Imogene was a little tired; and said she felt unequal to converse with him any longer.

"I am anticipating another pleasure when he

returns, which depends, however, on your consent," said Imogene, caressingly.

"Which you are sure of, dearest; I could refuse nothing to you to-day."

"Mind, then, *that* is a promise," said Imogene, holding up her little white hand to enforce it.

Agnes remarked how well she seemed; and certainly, whatever misgivings had previously assailed her when she looked upon her sister's placid face, with its young beauty shining forth in the joyousness of its restored cheerfulness, she felt consoled and soothed.

The day passed most happily for the sisters. Since the sad events which had so altered and blighted their lives, never had they passed hours so entirely contented and untroubled. They talked, and Imogene's glad laugh ringing through the old room, like the rays of sunshine playing on the gilt tracery of the walls and reflected from the Venetian mirror, seemed to give it as gay an aspect as a fairy bower.

Agnes, though more subdued than Imogene, was less self-controlled and quiet than usual. A little

colour was in her cheek and a bluer light on her eyes. The drooping plant had revived in the warmth and glow both from without and within. Her hair fell lower on her cheeks, and its wavy coils caught the light on looser masses than their wont. Poor Agnes, that subtle, beautifying poison called Happiness was flowing through her veins also.

In the afternoon Wentworth returned. There was a whispered conference between him and Imogene, which ended in Imogene's calling Agnes, and putting on her finger a pearl ring of great beauty. To the ring was attached a chain which fastened it to a gold bracelet.

"Our gift, dear Agnes."

Agnes looked amazed, and Imogene clapped her hands with delight.

"I managed it all," she said. "I would not ask Mary, but I asked Herbert. I have no money, and I would not ask you for any; but I had the little turquoise brooch and earrings, and I asked Herbert to get them exchanged for this ring and bracelet."

Agnes embraced her tenderly. She could not speak. There was such a proof of Imogene's entire restoration to herself, in the way she had managed this little surprise, that Agnes was almost overcome with joy and gratitude. Both sisters were too inexperienced to discover how inadequately the little turquoise brooch and earrings represented the costly jewel on Agnes' finger.

It was a very happy home scene that evening. Two of the three who were in that room never forgot it. Why do I infer that the third did so? Is memory the attribute of the living only?

CHAPTER IX.



WENTWORTH and Agnes complied with Imogene's wish and went to the theatre. The play was *Torquato Tasso Imprisoned and Crowned*, and was performed in the Mausoleo d' Augusto.

These open-air theatres are very common in Italy, and it is astonishing what good performances are sometimes to be witnessed there. It is a favourite mode of spending a summer afternoon with the middle class of Rome, and the benches and boxes are usually crowded. The fine amphitheatre, vaulted over by the evening sky, is, it must be confessed, an admirable site. When Agnes and Wentworth entered the box, she was struck with this gorgeous natural decoration; the intense blue deepening into a kind

of purple blackness, except where in the west the flaming sunset lit the sky and was reflected on a portion of the theatre.

The play was badly constructed and badly written ; but the actor who personated Tasso, and the actress who took the part of Leonora, were real artists, and triumphed over the poverty of their parts.

In Rome, where he was crowned and where he died, there seemed a particular fitness in this representation. For Agnes, who had the most profound interest in the life and character of Tasso, and who felt quite a personal sorrow in his fate, it was almost too vivid and real.

The actor was studiously dressed, to appear a living portrait of the knightly poet. He was a man of great personal gifts and endowed with a melodious voice.

In the opening of the piece, the impression is at once given of a life torn by a fatal love and poisoned by the miserable rivalries and stings so rife in the petty Italian courts of those times. The majestic melancholy with which

the poet bore himself through all, with the occasional outbursts of indignation when the chain of an unworthy servitude galled him too strongly; were portrayed with exquisite comprehension.

A great actor has a twofold task; he must not only exhibit the passions which convulse our being and which express themselves outwardly, but he must, to attain verisimilitude in his art, display those apparent contradictions which obey influences from within; that acceptance of, or that revolt from, fate, which is the touchstone of character. Sympathy interprets, criticism dissects. The most profound knowledge of anatomy never enabled a man to paint a life-like figure. Besides the bones and muscles, there are the blood, flesh and spirit—that trinity which is life!

Hundreds of commentators may tell us what Shakspeare did or did not mean in describing Hamlet, but a great actor can show us Hamlet himself. The mind of the actor, by that subtle correspondence with the mind of the author,

which, in the imitative arts, is genius, reveals to us the poet's creation.

At first sight, it would seem very profound of a critic to speak of Hamlet's madness as feigned. But that which is most simple is always most likely to be profound and true. The madness is not entirely feigned. Caught in a terrible coil, with an adulterous mother, and a fratricide uncle occupying his murdered father's throne—swayed to and fro by conflicting feelings of the heart and appalling doubts of the conscience—a refined and questioning intellect searches heaven and earth for a standing-point from which to measure the awful circumstances in which it is placed. A revelation is vouchsafed; but while the conscience is appeased, the mind is strained till it feels it must almost inevitably overbalance itself;—and it would seem further removed from equilibrium than it really was, from the disproportion between itself and the guilty creatures around. The cowardice of the bystanders provokes Hamlet to exaggerate his own weakness. This is a peculiarity often observed in those

who are conscious that their minds are wavering. But the test is, where the exaggeration is voluntary and where involuntary. The subtle, agonizing doubt of one's own power of self-control is a madness in itself, but is only the madness of those who are sound on all points but the one which has been overtaken. So far, and so far alone, is there a flaw in that princely intelligence, but the flaw is real, not assumed. A great actor manifests this at once to us, and volumes of arguments fail to convince us in opposition to the actual presentment before us.

The actor who represented Torquato Tasso went with great beauty and admirable delicacy through the various changes of the poet's mind. There is something of Hamlet in Tasso. It is not the consciousness of a supernatural call to vengeance, but the unappeased claim of genius to vindicate its royal rights, amid the infamous hirelings of a court. And with both, the delicate, sensitive soul is goaded to the verge of madness. With both, there is the vain yet clinging love which comes in as the pathetic minor amid these loud discords.

In the last part of the first act, there was a most effective scene. Tasso has been persuaded to read part of his poem to the Duke Alfonso and his court. He at first selects a descriptive passage, suited to his audience, but is treacherously requested by one of the courtiers, who hopes that he will thus betray himself, to read one of the love scenes. He hesitates, but the temptation is too irresistible. He commences with a low voice. Leonora's fatal face is turned towards him. He reads, and, warmed with the beauty which he has himself created, and inspired by her presence, the passionate inflections of his voice give to the lovely verses an individual meaning. Leonora breathes quickly, and a glow of delight is in her face. The snare which has been laid for the poet succeeds: he is carried away by the rapturous feelings of the moment; he no longer even follows the written manuscript, but the long pent-up feelings find voice at last; it is not the poet, but the lover who speaks, and who speaks to his love. He rises and approaches her. The perilous sweetness of

such a moment overcomes him, and in the face of her brother and of the court, he reveals, thinly veiled by that enchanting verse, his long-cherished secret. Leonora's tremulous yet passionate joy, her fear of her brother and of the dark gulf of hate and scorn which is opening under her lover's feet, were exquisitely displayed by the actress.

How tenderly, as the curtain fell, Wentworth took the hand of Agnes in his, and how unconsciously she returned the pressure! Under the influence of genius, the heart melts, as it were, and flows forth to another heart in sympathy with its own!

The play went on. By the art of the actors, the awakened suspicions of the duke, the web of envy and calumny closing round their destined victim, the forced calmness which was imposed by necessity on Leonora, were admirably rendered. "The doubt he died by," and which was the iron in Tasso's soul, was made manifest. The double life which is in all, but which in poets is more marked than in others, was revealed. The inner and supreme intellect seemed con-

scious of the danger to which the faculties of the brain were exposed. At times the poet asserted himself grandly, and was victorious, in the face of his foes and of heaven; at others, he seemed to shrink with an appalling doubt of himself, which is an agony keener than madness itself can produce. Then came the long imprisonment in the Hospital of St. Anne. Tasso returns to Ferrara, like the moth to the flame, for the sake of once more being near Leonora, and is thus entrapped by his enemies, and condemned to this cruel outrage; while she fades slowly beside her relentless brother. But the mournful pathos of this dreary tragedy, so bitterly endured in real life, was alleviated in the fiction, by a scene between Tasso and Leonora. Leonora is dying. The daughter of Renata, as she herself says, has passed like a vain shadow upon the earth. A life misplaced, misunderstood, unfulfilled! Pining away for that moment of fruition which all long for, but which Heaven has denied to some, and with a consciousness which weighs like sin on her soul,—that love for her has been the curse

of Tasso's life,—how can Leonora bear the burden of lingering existence? They meet. Both so changed, both bearing such fatal traces of the long and terrible years. A dying woman, a broken-hearted man; but amid the waste of both existences one feeling has gained in intensity, and struck deeper than in, perchance, fairer lives—the love which was never stronger and purer than at this sacramental hour. They sit side by side; at first there are the broken words, the murmured utterances, the timid reticences, which long-crushed hearts, beat they ever so wildly, cannot instantly break through; but then Leonora gains courage, and with the divine despair of the dying, at first slowly, then more impetuously—drop by drop, then in a full rich stream—pours out the confession of her life.

“I loved you, at first, from *that* hour; then on, on, always—now and for ever!” Her whole heart a rare jewel, which only bore his name, her whole life a costly sacrifice, poured out for him. “My poet, I love you.”

Tasso seems stunned. "Have the great portals opened, and is he already in Paradise?"

He bends forward, closer and closer, listening to her words, looking into her eyes, breathing her breath, till the poor thin hands are held out to clasp him to her breast, and he sinks lower and lower as one unworthy, till he is prostrate at her feet. Such a love! such a sorrow! such a life! have sanctified her. It is not the woman, the mistress, but the saint who speaks. That confession has liberated her from the sting of life—she is dead!

"Too late, too late!" murmured Agnes, too much overpowered by the emotion she witnessed and shared, to see, save through her tears, the end—the poor room in the convent of Sant' Onofrio, or to hear the bell that pealed for the coronation in the Capitol, blended with the knell which tolled for the parting soul, as Tasso died, conquered yet crowned! Was his life a failure? "Oh, the little more, and how much it is! Oh, the little less, and what worlds away!"

Agnes sat with all her attention fixed on the

stage; her cheek supported by her hand, and her eyes bright with the tears she had shed. In this fictitious representation there was so much that came home to her heart; though the position was so different, yet so much in the sentiment held up to her, as in a mirror, her life's bitter trial, that to her it was like a revelation.

Wentworth was less engaged in the play, his thoughts were more absorbed with his companion. In moments of great agitation the very atmosphere around us becomes, as it were, infected by our fiery struggles. Warm effluences seemed to surround Agnes, and Wentworth kindled into a flame of love and hope at her side. Not a word was spoken; but as their eyes met, they felt that the world in which they had lived up to that hour had crumbled at their feet, and that undivided and together they had been born into another life!

At that moment, above the clang of the orchestra, one of the many nightingales which make their nests between the partitions of those massive stones, lifted its melodious voice to the

evening sky, and a hymn of love and joy, triumphant over death and sorrow, sounded in their ears.

Below, in the pit, Carlo Moroni was watching them. He had seen them from the beginning, and had watched Agnes with absolute hatred. When had she ever looked like this before? This was the real woman, the dim suggestion of whom he had so adored; and she was putting on all this glorious apparel of love and womanhood for another! His hand moved, as if he had clutched a dagger. How vindictively he rejoiced at his power!

"She shall know whose hand has destroyed him!" he muttered to himself, and then whispered to a friend who was near him, "That is Herbert Tremorne."

His companion asked him if he were sure of the facts, and of the identity of the person he thus accused.

Carlo paused. He saw that he must bring forward a proof of what he asserted. If the "affiliati" were relentless in their mode of administering their wild justice, they were also

scrupulous as to the certainty of the guilt of the offender. They strove that private vengeance should not be masked as political chastisement.

"Edelberg is positive that it is," he answered.

"Edelberg's report is scarcely to be trusted," said his friend.

Moroni rose and left the theatre; when he returned he took his seat away from the man to whom he had spoken, and Egidio and Giacinto were with him.

"O padre! how beautiful!" said poor little Giacinto, excited to the utmost by this unexpected pleasure.

"Hush! you must not talk so loud, but you can amuse yourself by looking round you."

The child sat still; there was a glitter in his father's eye which awed him; and besides this, Signor Carlo, who was an object of great fear to him, sat on the other side.

Giacinto looked round to amuse himself, and then suddenly started.

"Signora Agnese—look! look!"

"I see; do not talk so loud."

"She is with the *pittore*."

"What *pittore*?" asked Carlo.

"The *pittore* who is her great friend; they call him Herbert."

"Whom do you mean by *they*?"

The child paused.

"I mean she calls him so."

"Are you quite sure?"

"I am quite sure."

"I am satisfied," said Carlo, setting his teeth together; and the expression with which he looked at Egidio required no comment. He then moved and took his former place. "It *is* Herbert," he said, to his former neighbour.

When the play was over, Wentworth and Agnes walked out among the first. Moroni, Egidio, and the child followed them.

"Where are we going?" said the child, shrinking from the stern grasp of his father, who held him as if in a vice.

"I am going to see the Signora Agnese. I am going to give her a pleasure."

The child looked up, and his little heart sank as he heard the fierce laugh of the two men.

"You shall take her these flowers," said Carlo, in a softer voice, as he purchased some from a stall as he passed. "You are quite sure that *pittore* is called Herbert?"

"She calls him so."

"Well, we shall see."

Carlo and Egidio then conversed together, and took no more notice of him.

A little further on they were met by a tall fair man, who stopped to speak to Moroni.

"What are you doing in Rome, Edelberg?" said Moroni.

"My wife is very ill; I want a German doctor for her. She does not like Italians."

"*Ben tornato*, however, whatever brings you; do you return immediately?"

"At ten o'clock I am to fetch Dr. Kislich."

"Come with us, then; it is not eight; we have something to do in which you can help us. You know Herbert?"

"Yes."

Carlo then whispered to him: Giacinto heard nothing more, but he noticed that their new companion seemed angry and walked spasmodically.

CHAPTER X.



WENTWORTH and Agnes were quite silent as they left the theatre. The fall of the curtain had been enough to recall Agnes to the truth of the position in which they found themselves. The enchanted life was over, the real life had begun. Not so Wentworth. But he would not break by words the sweet dream he was in; while by his side she was struggling with thoughts which seemed to rack her whole being.

They had entered a carriage, and were driving homewards.

Agnes never faltered in her clear recollection of her own position. She was seated by the man who had saved Imogene's reason and, it might be said, her life, but who by that very act was

bound to Imogene. She thought of her sleeping sister at home, and her whole frame shuddered. But if Herbert should return, he would claim his bride, and she and Wentworth would be free. But then came the doubt, which every day's silence made more appalling, that Herbert, alas! was no more; and then, how hopeless was their fate! The truth must be told to Imogene when she was able to hear it, and then would come Wentworth's final separation from both sisters. There was no hesitation as to that catastrophe. The sacrifice must be made, and made by Agnes. But there was still their friendship, heart-warm and strong and true, that might always be. The sinking at her heart told her, this was not friendship, this was love. It was a piercing pain to Agnes to feel she had no longer control enough over her feelings to be satisfied with that gentle emotion which at one time seemed to have brought back to her all she had dared to hope of earthly felicity.

With a slight shiver she drew her scarf around her.

Wentworth turned, and took her hand.

"Agnes, dearest, best beloved, do you feel at last how I love you?"

"Hush!" she said, with a wild terror, putting her hand before his mouth. "Do not let me hear such words from your lips."

"I must speak to you, Agnes."

"Not now," she entreated, as if in bodily pain. He looked at her, and saw she was flushed as with fever.

"I am cruel," he said, with a gentleness very foreign to his usual manner. "You are agitated—not well. I will be silent then: do not tremble so," and he put his arm round her. "I have frightened her," he murmured to himself. "I am a brute to speak with such violence when I know how overstrained she is;" and he tried to soothe her with a tenderness so sweet, yet so exquisitely painful to Agnes, that she shut her eyes, and prayed that voiceless, wordless prayer which in such moments of grief we all breathe forth from our inner hearts. Infidels or believers, we all blindly grope for help after the power we dimly feel above and beyond us.

They were just passing the Ponte St. Angelo, and the white statues in the shadowy twilight seemed to Agnes like angels welcoming a weary pilgrim along some Via Sacra to the final bourne of all.

"Wentworth," she said, "we must not meet again; you must gain information about Herbert; you must go to Spielberg."

"I will go." He was touched. Her fine intuition had guessed the sacrifice he must make.

"I must break the truth to Imogene."

"Wait till I am fortunate enough to obtain information if Herbert lives."

"Yes, if Herbert lives."

"Then?"

"We must never rest till he is released. Oh, if I could think that Imogene would be happy after all!"

"She will be happy, and we also."

"Hush!"

"We shall be happy, Agnes, I feel it."

"But—if—the—worst be true, and Herbert be dead——"

"God have mercy on us!"

"Then our duty is clear, Godfrey."

"Not clear, if you mean that our happiness is to be sacrificed. I will wait as long as you like; Imogene must be told the truth gradually—with all possible precautions—that Herbert is dead; and then she will find consolation in your happiness. I will return; and I promise you she will not know me as the Herbert of her dreams."

"Never! never!"

"I will leave you for a time; when I return, let her know all the truth, and be prepared to receive me as her brother."

"Never! never!"

"Agnes, hear me. I promise you not to speak of the future, but let me speak of the past; let me tell you what made me what I was when I first knew you, and how communion and association with you changed me; and then judge, if this be a love lightly felt, lightly valued, and to be lightly thrown aside. If we love each other, by that alone our duties to each other are paramount."

"Not paramount—I owe my happiness to Imogene, if by my own foolishly tampering with straightforward duty I have perilled hers. I ought not to have deceived her."

"Listen to me." He descended from the carriage, dismissed it, and led Agnes into the gardens of the Barberini Villa.

"I must tell you, my Agnes—yes, I will call you, My Agnes, for life and for eternity—that since the day my eye first fell on you, on the steps of the old church, my life took a new direction, and was vivified by another impulse. In the strange succession of accidents which brought us together, nothing was more strange than the sudden and entire revolution which all my preconceived resolutions underwent. When I think how hideous was the selfish and hard existence to which I had determined to cling, I cannot but shudder at the future to which I had condemned myself;—not to trust, never to love; to give out of my abundance to those who needed it only as a barren duty, and in that official manner which may relieve a want, but

never yet soothed a sorrow ! Because I had suffered from the treachery of a woman, and the meanness of the world, I imagined there was nothing left but to disdain one sex, and separate from the other."

" But you would have been true to yourself sooner or later, dear Godfrey. Think of your kindness to Herbert."

" Herbert Tremorne interested me, and through him I was enabled to be of service to the party he espoused ; but there was no real heart in anything I did. I felt a sincere compassion for him ; for I felt sure he would wake as I had done from all these glowing dreams of regeneration and progress to the futility of all attempts to make men better or happier. The inevitable advance of material science slowly leads to successive phases of improvement ; but for a man or men to do anything seemed to me the wildest of chimeras. I pitied those who still dreamed the impracticable and illusory dreams of philanthropy, patriotism, benevolence ; but you must remember that in the two affections which

were nearest my heart I had been deceived, and I was stung to the soul by the deception as much as by the disappointment."

Agnes pressed the hand she held.

"You have never heard me speak of this before, but I will tell you the circumstances. From my boyhood I loved Millicent; she and my cousin John were the dearest objects of my affection. My own parents had died when I was young, and left me to my eldest uncle's care. This uncle is of course Marmaduke's eldest brother. My father was the second brother. I lived with him, and his only son and myself grew up as companions. Millicent was his ward. Our mutual love had been laughed at, encouraged, and then, as we grew older, somewhat restrained, but we were understood to be tacitly engaged. I was to win my bride when I had earned a home in which to instal her. How I toiled at college, how I strained every faculty to forestal this time, I need not tell you. My cousin left college a twelvemonth before I did. He met with an accident which crippled him for some

months, and confined him to the house. He and Millicent were thrown into constant association, but I suspected nothing; how could I? John was good, clever, admirable in many ways, but he had certain personal defects which few women could have passed over, and his habits were of a manliness which verged on brutality. His horse, his hound, were far dearer to him than the prettiest woman ever could hope to be. Suddenly there came a gap in our correspondence; he did not write to me for six weeks. Millicent's letters continued as usual, but one or two trifles in these roused my suspicions that all was not well at home. I accidentally heard that my uncle was ill—in fact, not expected to live; yet I was not sent for. He died. Millicent wrote me a few lines to make some excuse for my not having been summoned to the funeral: there were so many older relatives than myself whose presence was necessary, that the house held no more sleeping rooms. Then came a long silence from her. I could bear it no longer, but left Cambridge and hastened home. The

last part of the journey I made on horseback, and arrived quite unexpectedly. After a little delay Millicent appeared. She was a little flushed and agitated, but as tender in manner as ever.

“‘Have you received my letter, Godfrey?’ she asked eagerly, and before I could speak.

“‘No, I have not heard from you for more than a fortnight, and I was anxious, and came to see what was the matter. How is John?’

“‘Her colour deepened a little.

“‘He is gone to London on business. If you had waited, you would have had my letter; but then I should not have seen you. You will stop a day or two?’

“‘Yes, till to-morrow evening.’

“‘Then I will go and tell them about your room, for we are all in such confusion.’

“‘She left me. I went to the window mechanically, and looked out. Everything seemed so unchanged in the house and about it, that I could scarcely realize that its master was changed, and that it might be no longer my home. As I leaned out, I heard the gallop of a horse, and in-

instinctively looked towards it. I could have sworn that it was the figure of my cousin I saw through the thick trees of the avenue galloping towards the lodge. At that moment Millicent entered.

“‘Look!’ I exclaimed, ‘surely that is John.’

“She laid her hand on my shoulder; it did not tremble.

“‘It is very like him,’ she said, smiling; ‘but as he is in London, I am sorry we cannot make out that it is he. He will be vexed to have missed you.’”

“I spent the two days with her; there were a good many of the family staying in the house, but she and I were as if we were alone. She contrived to isolate us as it were, and as it was natural that we two, who had for so long lived under the same roof, should be most peculiarly intimate, it did not excite remark. Never could I have had more reason to believe that I was beloved, than during those two days. Once or twice Millicent, alluding to the probability of our long engagement, said,—

“‘Sometimes I think it would be wiser of me

not to remain a drag on your life: were you free, you might marry some rich bride, and she might aid you in all your plans and projects.'

" 'And you some rich man. Ah! if I thought so!'

" 'What would you do if I did so?' she asked, looking at me steadily, as if she would read into my soul. 'Remember, I am poor, and I hate poverty.'

" 'Best not ask,' I answered.

" She sighed, and then the next minute was as lively as possible, and as fond. We parted. I mounted my horse at the door; she stood beside him patting his neck, and looking up into my face with a wistful, pleading expression. I stooped and kissed the forehead, with its candid and innocent whiteness.

" 'God bless you, my darling!' I said.

" 'God bless you, Godfrey!'

" And so we parted.

" When I reached Cambridge, I opened the letter which was waiting for me. It enclosed a few lines from John, telling me he was engaged to Millicent. A letter from Millicent, in which

she told me she had long regretted the folly of our childish engagement; that she felt that with our absolute poverty in the present, and the positive nullity of our expectations in the future, she would be doing a wrong to me to hold me to it. That she knew me so well, and my pertinacity of purpose, she felt that as long as she was free I should consider myself bound; that all her friends had advised her, nay, peremptorily required her, to break her engagement with me, and to accept the hand of my cousin, and that she thought of doing so; but, at any rate, I was to consider our engagement dissolved. This, at least, was the purport of her letter, for it was clothed in language so obscure, and involved, and reticent, that I had to read it over several times without understanding it. John's few lines were more to the purpose. I understood it all now. She had been afraid of our meeting, and had sent him out of the way. I believe she invented some excuse for despatching him to town, and did not acquaint him with my arrival, for John was no coward. However, so it was, and at

the very moment I held her in my arms as my own affianced bride, she was the betrothed of my cousin! The poor excuse for her hypocrisy that she afterwards gave was, that she was so afraid of me!

“Was not this enough, Agnes, to turn my blood to gall—to blister for evermore the beauty of the fairest face, in my eyes—to make me inclined to curse God and die? I was dashed at once not only from happiness to utter misery, but from faith to total infidelity in everything. Now can you understand from what an abyss you raised me? I often had met good and excellent women—aunt May, for instance,—but it always happened that some accidental circumstance had made them the sufferers in the game of life. And there seemed no alternative. There was something in the fact of loving which brought down a curse. I loathed it all—the weakness of the deceived, the falsehood of the deceivers, the cant, the hollowness, the hypocrisy, which pervaded social, political, religious life. In the midst of this suffering, my cousin was killed by

an accident; Millicent was a widow, and I became the master of that property which had been her temptation. Everything that followed my transformation, from the poor man who was to toil for his future subsistence, into the rich master of Ribstone estate, only made me more certain of the baseness of my kind. But I will pass over these experiences. I have only recurred to them to prove to you how a hard heart and a corrupt mind,—yes, corrupt, for, in order to believe so implicitly in corruption, one must be corrupt,—learned slowly to believe in unselfishness, disinterestedness, duty, and that Godfrey Wentworth became by degrees worthy to love Agnes Tremorne.”

With what reverential tenderness he kissed her hand. Through all her fears and doubts, what a flow of exquisite happiness dilated her heart as she listened to him.

“ Agnes, you will see that, in your dearest wishes in this life, in your highest hopes for another, we will go hand in hand, and heart in heart; for I love now no vain ideal, but the incarnate Truth, the palpable realization of my

most glorious aspirations, the soul of my soul which stands before me in the semblance of a pale angel, whom I worship as well as love !”

None would have recognized in these impassioned accents the grave tones of the stoical Wentworth. Agnes felt as if a baptism of fire was consecrating her to some supreme destiny.

“I do not ask you to be mine now ; I only ask you to tell me once, as if you and I stood on some spot cut off from every other human tie, whether you believe in my love ?”

“I do,” she murmured.

“And will you not, my own, tell me more ?”

“I love you, Godfrey.”

“God !” was the only word which broke from his lips ; it was the utterance of a perfect joy, as he clasped her to his heart.

Never was an embrace the sacrament of a more boundless passion. For both, life had been a barren path for so long ; but the desert around suddenly bloomed as a rose ; and to both that crowning moment of existence,—when all above,

around, beneath, is annihilated, and the only reality is the heart which presses against the heart, and the love which is conscious of love in return, and the soul which grasps its companion soul,—was vouchsafed in entire fulness.

To bestow this boon,—a true love,—is the gauge and test of our immortality; to bestow and receive it, is the appanage of God's elect alone.

When that moment of transport was past, and life in its separate individualities was again felt by each, Agnes uttered the one word, "Imogene."

"Yes," said Wentworth, as they walked hand in hand towards the gate of the villa. "I had resolved that I should tell you this, and then leave Rome in search of Herbert. I have made all my arrangements to do so."

"And if your search be fruitless?"

"My dearest, it will not be so. This great happiness has given me a luminous prescience, and I feel certain that Herbert *will* return. In any case, everything is arranged. Marmaduke will complete anything I have left undone, in the way of business, and I have requested aunt

May to take care of you both. She loves you so dearly, my precious one, and understands my Agnes almost as well as I do. I know that Marmaduke would wish to be a father to Imogene, and that for her mother's sake, the mother of whom he deprived her, he already loves her as if she were his child; but I also know, that you, to whom the whole sad history is known, will never be able to overcome your shrinking from the man who wronged your father. He will not, therefore, intrude upon you. One thing more: if, as men sometimes do, I stand on the summit of felicity, because life itself is completed and fulfilled, and I go to my death, let me tell you that you and your sister have been my only thought."

"Godfrey!"

"I have thought of everything, and, as far as I could, have provided for everything. There is no contingency that has not presented itself to my thoughts. Our love, my Agnes, seems to me to have lifted me at once where the vicissitudes of fate cannot touch me. The felicities

of union may give me enjoyment; the anguish of separation cannot mar this ever-present blessedness. You know the legend of the soul seeking its twin soul on earth, that it may become *one* angel in heaven. That transformation seems to me to have already taken place with us. My heart seems to beat in yours, my pulse to throb with yours, and the life which flows in my veins has its source in you; I feel nothing can really part us."

"Death," said Agnes; "how doubly hard I should feel it now to die."

"Were you to die, my Agnes," answered Wentworth, in a solemn tone, and holding her with a clasp which would have resisted the king of terrors himself, "whatever I suffered I should not feel divided from you. My life would be spent as if you were beside me still, to encourage in good, to stimulate in progress, to sustain in trial. In possession of your love, a few years' separation would count but little; our spirits would still be indivisibly and for ever united. If you reached yonder gateway first and passed

through it, should I feel you had left me? I know I should overtake you. Do not let us think of such contingencies. Let us dwell on what will be our actual future. Marmaduke has purchased the Grange."

"Ah!"

"I will purchase it of him; we shall live there if you like."

"Where you will."

"Part of the year, at least, for I have too long neglected my own home. Think what my life will be, encouraged by your example in its external activity for the good of all within my reach, and animated by your love, in all the inner sympathies and affections, which give internal delight to the heart and soul. And then to cherish and love you, my darling, and to minister to you, as you have so long cherished and loved others, and ministered to them—to devote my entire service to the one precious treasure which God has given me, and radiating from her to all that is good, and pure, and true—my companion on earth, and, if

you reach the goal first, my angel in heaven! Shall you ever be less mine than now, though I may no longer hold this hand or kiss this cheek? The spirit is mine always. The mortal may fail; the immortal abides for ever. If I am to die first——”

“Godfrey, I beseech you, do not speak so; God is good,” and Agnes raised her eyes with passionate supplication to heaven.

“I do not say, love me still, love me always, but I say, love me with a living love, not a repining love for a dead man, but a love which realizes its union with a living spirit.”

And thus weaving dreams of happiness, more likely than most dreams to be consummated, for they were founded on imperishable realities, the two proceeded towards the gate of the villa—Agnes and her lover!

Lover! That most beautiful name which a finite creature can bear! he who, according to Coleridge’s sublime definition, “has found the insufficiency of the self for itself, and seeks in another the completion of its own.”

They spoke not only of themselves, but of others: Herbert and Imogene, aunt May, who was to be coaxed to remain with them, Giacinto, who was to be rescued from Egidio at any price.

"If I am but successful in finding Herbert," exclaimed Wentworth, "then there will begin for us a happiness which will only be inferior to the eternal beatitude which will be its goal and fulfilment."

They had almost emerged from the closely covered arcade of cypresses, beneath which they were walking, when the attention of both was drawn to two persons who were passing in the road beyond, and who paused for a moment to look into the garden through the iron trellice of the gate. The moon had risen, and shone full in their faces; and to the amazement and almost horror of both Agnes and Wentworth, the face of the one, a young man, was like Herbert Tremorne; paler, thinner, more sickly-looking than either of them remembered him, looking as one

buried alive might look when suddenly restored to the light of heaven, but still blanched with an unnatural and terrible pallor. The other was a woman, and her face was less clearly seen through her veil, but the quick imagination of Godfrey suggested Millicent Wentworth, and the more superstitious fancy of Agnes shudderingly sought to recognize the dead Imogene.

As they silently, and with a start which betrayed to each the shock they had received, hurried to the gate, the figures vanished, or, fused with the other pedestrians who were treading that street, lost their preternatural and menacing aspect.

They walked up the steep ascent of the Via di S. Onofrio in silence. Moroni had already reached it. He gnashed his teeth like a famished tiger, and breathed hard as he uttered the one word "Alfine" when the two came in sight. He and Edelberg stood just without the threshold of the large doors of the house. Within, close under the staircase, so as neither to see or be seen, Egidio held Giacinto in his arms. The child was silently trembling, but he dared

not move or speak, though he could have screamed as Moroni slipped beside them in the darkness, and laid his hand on his father's arm.

"They come," he muttered, in a voice which could not have been recognized as his.

On reaching the foot of the stairs, Wentworth struck a match and lit a tiny taper he carried, as is the fashion in Rome.

They walked slowly up-stairs; the momentary fear had passed, but the revulsion from the ecstasy of joy they had so lately experienced filled their hearts with a thrilling awe which did not admit of words. Once again, too, in the shadow of her home, its depressing atmosphere of gloom and anxiety enfolded Agnes.

When they reached the landing-place which led to her rooms, they found Mary with a light waiting to receive them, and Agnes and Wentworth parted with a clasp of the hands which was like an embrace in its close and passionate pressure.

Wentworth looked at her as she stood above him: the pale light of the lamp which Mary held fell on her face; it was bright as the face

of an angel. An irresistible impulse made him return and again clasp her in his arms, and then he descended.

"Signor Herbert," said a child's voice, "I want to give these flowers to Signora Agnese," and the little figure of Giacinto ran up a flight of stairs.

"What do you want with me, Giacinto? you here at this hour!" and Wentworth hastened towards him.

"You are the Signor Herbert, then?"

"No matter; it is too late, my boy, to give these flowers to-night," and he raised the child in his arms. At that instant a momentary flash from a light lit his figure; it vanished, and a sharp pain struck him. "Good God!" There was another and another; and in a moment, with a faint groan, he had fallen with the child in his arms: Moroni's dagger, Egidio's knife had pierced to the heart! Giacinto rent the air with one scream as he fell, and was extricated in a state of insensibility from the body by his father. Moroni started forwards, and bent over

the prostrate man. He saw his work was done. By the gleam of the lamp, which Edelberg's shaking hands swayed to and fro, he pointed out to his accomplice the high fair features, the light brown hair.

"You can make your report, Edelberg. They will believe now."

"Ay, it is Herbert; I can attest it."

"Let us go now; justice is done on the traitor, and the traitress," he added, for he looked up, and on the stairs above he saw Agnes: she had come down on hearing the child's voice and scream; Mary was following more slowly.

Agnes' eyes were dilated, and she spoke not. She looked at Moroni without seeming conscious of him, and sank slowly on her knees beside Wentworth.

"He was a traitor," said Moroni, "but thou art an arch-traitress; thou hast destroyed him. Who was it said, 'I swear that that man is not Herbert Tremorne?'" He threw down his dagger and ran down the stairs; Egidio and Edelberg had already left the house.

Mary gazed in horror at the spectacle before her. She was powerless to scream, or move, or even make a step towards her mistress.

Agnes knelt beside him, her white dress stained through and through with the blood which was now flowing fast. Her hand was on his heart.

"Lift him up," at last she said to Mary.

Between them, but chiefly by Agnes, who was endowed as it were with supernatural strength at this dreadful moment, the two women raised Wentworth, and carried him up the steps, through the still open door, and laid him on Agnes' bed.

Agnes again felt his heart, and explored with a gaze which seemed to pierce through the "body of death" the ashy pale face. It was too evident that no reply would be given by that mute and already stiffening clay.

"Leave me, Mary," said Agnes. "Imogene may ring." Mary obeyed, more alarmed and stunned by this calm than by the fact itself.

When she was gone, Agnes rose up, and locked the door. She was alone with her dead!

CHAPTER XI.



AGNES sat till morning by the side of the bed. Blood was on her dress, and on her hands. As the body had been borne into the room, it had left a trace of blood with every step. From the door to the bed were deep, dark stains, which gave the room a ghastly aspect. Agnes seemed turned to marble. She sat with her eyes fixed on the face of the dead man, but did not seem capable of thought or sense. She stroked his cold hand with childish pertinacity, but without apparent consciousness.

The flowers which Giacinto had held to Wentworth had been picked up by Mary, and laid on the bed beside him. Their fair petals were splashed with blood.

As the morning rose in its clear, truth-telling

brightness, and shone into the room, it would have been difficult to say, but for the slight motion of the hand, which was the living one of those two.

Mary had gone once or twice to Imogene's room, but she slept calmly and undisturbed, and had returned to wait outside Agnes' door. She had once or twice knocked gently, but, receiving no reply, had waited outside, sobbing as if her heart would break. She felt something must be done, but what? She could not disturb this vigil; she was counting the minutes till it was time to send to the Piazza di Spagna, to aunt May, the only friend of her poor mistress.

At last she heard the clock strike six; she knocked again, but still all was silent. At that moment the door-bell rang. She could scarcely repress a scream when she saw the uniform of the gendarmes.

The persons on the floor below had heard a scream and slight scuffle the night before, and had conjectured some "coltellata," the all-expressive term used in Rome to designate such

events. The only effect on them had been to cause them to draw an additional bolt across their own door.

Under the holy Pontifical government no one knows to what unpleasant consequences it may lead—the being mixed up in any case of death ; all get out of the way in such circumstances, for whoever is found on the spot is liable to be taken up on suspicion. In the morning, however, they had apprised the police.

The gendarmes ordered Mary to open the door. She pointed to its being locked inside. In a few minutes they forced it open. Obtuse as such persons are, there was something in the aspect of that room that awed them. Mary had clasped her arms round Agnes, and was sobbing over her. Agnes slowly raised her eyes, and looked blankly upon the intruders. They respected the utter desolation of her bereavement ; they merely touched the body to make sure of the fact of death, and then turned and questioned Mary.

She told them what she knew—that her mistress had gone out in the afternoon, and had returned

rather late. The gentleman who accompanied her had left her at the door, and she, Mary, was lighting him down-stairs when she heard a child's voice, a scream, and a fall; that before she could descend the first flight of steps she heard two or three men run down-stairs, but had been too alarmed to recognize any one; that she and her mistress had lifted the body, and placed it on the bed. The poor gentleman had died on the spot. There was no robbery.

The police muttered the words "*vendetta personale*," and then asked his name. Mary looked at her mistress; Agnes' white lips moved, but no words were heard. Some of the persons below had followed the police, and stood on the threshold. They now volunteered their information.

The child had called out, "Signor Herbert."

"Herbert?"

Mary said at last,—

"No, Wentworth."

"Enough," said the head of the police, who had caught the first name, and deemed the other a superfluity of no consequence but to a "forestiere,"

and he wrote down the name "Herbert" on his tablets, and some descriptive particulars as to the face and figure of the corpse, and, bowing with compassionate respect to the unconscious Agnes, he and his attendants left the room. With the obliging courtesy of an Italian he beckoned Mary to the door, and conferred with her for a few moments, offering to send the necessary persons for the last inevitable duties.

The offer was accepted, and the room was cleared.

Nothing more was seen of the officials. On their return to the police office, an examination was made relative to the name. It was found that an Englishman of that name had been imprisoned in Spielberg on political grounds. He belonged to those secret societies which were considered as criminal in Rome as in the Austrian possessions. It had been supposed he had died of the gaol fever, but from some subsequent and recent information, it was found he had escaped, and it was supposed was lying *perdu* under another name in Rome. The de-

scription was identical, and it was thought a rather favourable circumstance that he had been thus conveniently removed. A merely nominal search was made for the assassins, and then it was dropped. So ended the judicial part of the tragedy.

"My dear," said Mary, when the room was empty again, speaking to Agnes in the old tones that she had used when her beloved charge was a child; "my dear, you must not stay here. Miss Imogene will not be long before she wakes and asks after you—what can we do or say?"

At the name of Imogene, Agnes stood up as if moved by a spring. She murmured in a thick voice,—

"I am coming."

Mary took advantage of this movement, and led her into the studio in mortal terror of some greater undefined ill falling upon them. She took off her dress and replaced it, smoothed her hair, and wiped the poor cold forehead, damp and stony as that of the dead. When she touched the numb hand, she could have groaned ;

it was stained with blood, the bracelet and ring dyed red with it. She unclasped the bracelet gently, and took off the ring from the nerveless fingers. Those hours by the dead had wasted Agnes as a fever of six months' duration might have done.

“As a rotten thing consumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten,” which falls to pieces at a touch, according to the inspired Hebrew poet—who even among that majestic Hebraic race had most profoundly plumbed the depths of human suffering—is the effect of a great sorrow on mortal life. In the death-struggle between the human soul and the angel of affliction, if the human soul endures, its frail earthly garment is rent to pieces.

When Mary took off the bracelet, Agnes started as a corpse might do on the contact of galvanism. She took it, or rather snatched it, blood-dyed as it was, and put it into the bosom of her dress. But she made no other movement. Mary hoped that the sight of Imogene would disturb this fearful immobility. She felt that tears, shrieks, convulsions, were less likely to be fatal.

As they approached Imogene's room, Agnes paused, and in a hard, mechanical voice said,—

“No more deceptions—let us speak the truth.”

Her voice was as if she spoke in sleep. They entered softly, but the sweet face of Imogene was still calm in slumber. The light through the *persiani* shone into the room and lit her face as with a smile. She was a little flushed and rosy with the downy warmth of her couch. The sheet was slightly pulled down, and the lovely neck and throat looked soft and white amid the golden hair which pressed the pillow.

Agnes set her teeth, and a look of horror passed over her face; but it was only a momentary rebellion. She approached nearer, and noiselessly sank on her knees beside the bed.

She then rose.

“Let her sleep,” she said; and, groping her way as one blind, she mechanically, from mere force of habit, returned to her studio.

Presently Imogene's bell rang. Mary, who had followed her mistress like some dumb faithful animal, looked at her at this sound.

"Go, Mary,—I will come; tell her I am coming soon."

Mary left her. Agnes sat before her easel an hour and a half, utterly stupefied. She put her hand up to her forehead.

"I must be mad," she muttered. "Oh, would I were! would I were!"

While she sat thus insensible to every outward sound, there was a loud, hasty ring at the door. She did not hear Mary open it, nor the pause and loud exclamations that followed; she did not even turn when Mary rushed into the room,—and this time not alone: she was followed by a hasty step; there was a pause on the threshold, and then, before Agnes had even looked towards the new-comer, she was clasped in Herbert Tremorne's arms.

For a time all was silent, save Mary's hysterical blessings and lamentings.

At last Herbert spoke.

"O Agnes! at last—at last."

"Herbert! good God, I thank thee!" and she slipped from his arms.

"She is saved, Mary—Imogene is saved; tell him." She was trembling from head to foot.

Mary told him briefly all that had happened. Aunt May had brought him herself, and told him all she knew up to the Saturday evening; she was, of course, ignorant of the last night's fatal catastrophe. She would not accompany him, that the joyful meeting might not be disturbed, but told him to tell the sisters she would be with them in the afternoon. She had driven away rejoicing in the happiness of those she loved. How closely united, yet how widely severed, are we from each other! Our life's tragedy may be enacted within a stone's throw of those we love and who love us, and they may hug themselves with the idea of our happiness while we writhe in misery. And yet we poor mortals go on talking of the force of our love and the power of our hate!

Herbert knew little. That very morning aunt May, according to promise, had called. He was on the sofa when she came in. She was immediately struck by his likeness to Godfrey, in

spite of his paleness and attenuation. His hair and beard had grown, and he had lost the tanned and coarse look which had prevented Marmaduke from noticing the resemblance.

After a little conversation he told her (aunt May's face always invited confidence) that since his recovery he had made one or two ineffectual efforts to find out some relatives of his, of the name of Tremorne. He feared they were no longer in Rome.

"Tremorne!"

"Do you know them? Good God!"

"Are you Herbert Tremorne?"

As he answered, the joy was almost too much: he nearly fainted away. When he recovered, he told her that he had intended to see Wentworth on the Wednesday, but that he had heard Wentworth was absent at Frascati. Aunt May recognized the hand of Millicent here in the mixture of truth and falsehood.

"You shall come with me directly to see them; I will send Wentworth to you to-night."

"We drove in this direction yesterday evening," said Herbert, when they were crossing the Ponte Sisto. "Had it not been late, Mrs. Wentworth would have shown me the Villa Barberini. Think of my being so near my dear one! but Mrs. Wentworth could find no trace of them."

"Go to Imogene, Herbert," said Agnes. "O my God! I thank thee."

Her expressions of gratitude were heart-rending. Herbert stood rooted to the ground. His mind had scarcely realized the great joy of seeing his cousins again, when this terrible affliction came to mar it and change happiness into mourning. He instinctively felt that to Agnes it was all but a deathblow. She had not spoken one syllable about herself, but there could be no mistaking that look "of infinite passion and of pain." There is a transfiguration produced by a great grief, which gives sublimity to the sufferer's face, and which can never be misunderstood.

"Come, Herbert," said Agnes.

They went together to the sitting room. Imogene was dressed and waiting for Agnes.

"Dear Agnes, you are quite late this morning. Have you come, too, Herbert, to tell me all about the play? How kind!"

Herbert took her in his arms, and dared not speak. But the instinct of the heart was awake. Imogene blushed crimson as Herbert kissed her.

"My dearest!" she said, and slightly disengaging herself, looked at him fixedly. "How strange! you look differently, and seem different in every way, to what you have ever been since I have been ill. You look so pale! Is it that I see better this morning? What is the matter, Agnes? He does not seem like my own true Herbert, and yet it is more like old times."

"True!" echoed Agnes, as she stood in the shade; and her voice sounded so harsh and hollow that Imogene, still holding Herbert's hand, looked at her sister with astonishment: "You are not well, darling; what is the matter, Herbert?"

Herbert could not answer, his tears could

scarcely be controlled; he silently kissed her hand, and Imogene, conscious of the love which vibrated through her own being, and absorbed in it to the forgetfulness of all else, threw her arms round his neck with transport.

“How happy, how very happy, I am to-day!”

Agnes rose at these words; she slipped behind her sister, and kissed the little bright head with her parched, burning lips. “God is very good,” she said, and left the room. Were these words the echo of those she had said under the cypresses in the Villa Barberini? Alas for human joy! alas for human sorrow! The next minute she was in her own room. Busy hands had been at work there. The dead man had been placed in a coffin, the face was rigidly calm and composed, and his hands were folded on his breast. “God is very good,” murmured Agnes, as she sank down beside the bed.

CHAPTER XII.



IN such a calamity as had befallen Agnes, any fortuitous circumstance is rarely sufficiently noted by the sufferer either to diminish or deepen the grief. But to Agnes it was an immeasurable comfort, and one which saved her reason, to think that with Imogene all was right. Her brain would have probably given way under the tension which an enforced calm would have required. The perplexity of how to break the truth to Imogene, would have been a difficulty almost impossible to be solved. The consciousness that hers only was the loss, total and entire as it was, had in it a deep solace. There was a sublime pathos in the smile, which lit her wasted features

as she clasped her arms beside the coffin and murmured,—

“ Mine, mine only, the love, the loss, the sorrow ! ”

She did not comprehend the catastrophe, except that Moroni had part in it, and that Wentworth had died for Herbert.

This last oblation had sealed all. The long deception was over, and she was free to devote her life to her own overwhelming grief. There was one who could care for Imogene now, and take faithful charge of that frail existence. Her own part was over.

The only thing she felt she could not endure, was seeing Herbert in the place occupied but yesterday by Wentworth. To witness a repetition of that play of love, with that ghastly resemblance between the two actors, would kill her. It was strange how the course of time seemed to have changed ; years seemed to have removed Imogene and Herbert from her to some dim past. The present was filled with Wentworth, the future was absorbed in grief for his loss.

Since yesterday there was a new heaven and a new earth for her.

While she was thus sitting beside the bed where the coffin was placed, Herbert entered. He came to persuade her to leave the room, and wished to tell her that all had been arranged. Aunt May had arrived, and had been told all.

Aunt May had entreated Mary to let her see her mistress, but Mary knew Agnes too well. She felt that this sorrow was inviolable. Later, sympathy such as aunt May's might be accepted, but at present the earth and all it held were shivered into dust for Agnes; she only felt that her woe, wide and infinite as the air, separated her, as if she were already in another sphere, from the world in which she had hitherto lived.

Herbert asked her to come with him. He was almost speechless from emotion.

"Does Imogene want me?"

"No. I left her thinking you were resting, but I want you, dearest. Oh, Agnes, do you not think I loved him too? do you imagine what I must

feel, that he should have fallen by a blow aimed at me, after all our friendship, after his having saved Imogene's life——” Agnes clasped her hands in mute thankfulness. “But, Agnes, think what he would have been to you had I been in his place, and let me in some measure replace him. You must come away.”

“I will not leave him,” said Agnes. “Let me be with him till the last. It is but for a day more.”

“When——” Herbert could not finish the sentence.

“Wednesday morning I am to go with you to his grave. Let me be alone till then. Tell Imogene I am in my room; do not let her feel the want of me.”

She spoke in a composed, still voice, more affecting than loud grief.

Agnes kept her word, and remained with him. She looked her last on the beloved face before the coffin was closed down. She and Herbert followed him to the Protestant cemetery. She was white as death, but did not weep, and held

one hand pressed to her bosom, where the jewel dyed with his heart's blood was resting. When the coffin was lowered into the grave, she fell with her face downwards, on the greensward, but neither moaned nor cried.

They lifted her up, and took her home, and for a week Agnes Tremorne lay between life and death. There was no disease, no fever, no cough. It was as if some organ of life had been quenched. There was the mute wheel silent and motionless, but "the spinning was all done."

Aunt May was now admitted, and stationed herself at the bedside, for Mary was at her wit's end, and was grateful to anyone who took the responsibility from her. It was so long since she had seen Agnes taken care of. Imogene wished to be allowed to nurse her sister, but she was so delicate herself, or rather, had been so delicate, that she was not allowed to do so; and, on the other hand, Mary observed that whenever Miss Imogene entered her mistress's room, the pale lips turned paler, and the drops stood on the brow as if she would swoon away, though

the next minute she would kiss her and hold her hand with deep affection. The truth was, it was the mere physical shrinking of the worn nerves : the heart and mind were unchanged, but the body had received an all but mortal blow. There were delirious moments when a stream of blood seemed to flow between Herbert, Imogene and herself, to atone for which a voice within her called them to account.

In spite of her sister's inexplicable malady, and the keen anxiety it cost her, the magic of Herbert's daily visits, the freedom and warmth of an affection, which till then had always seemed dimmed by some undefined cloud, the magnetism in the daily influence of the beloved, the touch of the hand, the glance of the eye, which proved how instinctively, though unconsciously, the presence of the one stimulated, enchanted, and inspired the other — had completed in the most wonderful way Imogene's cure. The true talisman was here, and she bloomed out in the most surprising and rapid manner. Health glowed in her veins, beauty was radiant in her

face, her broken recollection, which had been, like sweet bells, jangled and out of tune, was restored, and she soon was informed of all but the substitution of Wentworth for Herbert.

One evening they all sat in Agnes' room ; she was lying on the bed on which Wentworth had been laid. When he had been taken to his last resting-place, there remained still the impression of where the coffin had rested, and Agnes had tottered to the bed, thrown herself on it, and had never risen from it since. Her thin hand was over her brow, and her eyes had been fixed on the dark stain which had sunk into the painted floor. It was a large, deep stain ; and no ordinary cleansing, though Mary had done her best, had been able to remove it.

The "*persiani*" were closed, and the room was dark. The lovers, who sat together on the other side of the room, could not distinguish the white face from the pillow on which it rested ; and from the entire stillness, fancied she was asleep. They talked in a low voice, but her senses were so acute that she heard all they said.

They spoke of the future. Imogene was planning a dream of domestic happiness, but it was not in Rome—Rome was dangerous for Herbert. As soon as Agnes was well, they would all go. Till then everything must be deferred. Herbert sighed deeply.

“Why do you sigh?” asked Imogene.

“I am impatient to leave this city.”

“Is there danger to you here as in Venice?”

“Danger? yes, but not that alone. I can barely realize being beside you here; I have a constant fear of discovery; but there is one thing certain—I should not survive recapture. All my fortitude is spent, I have no strength now but for happiness.”

“Hush! you will wake her. How I long for her to get well; it seems so strange for her not to manage and decide everything. Aunt May said it was absolutely necessary she should have change of air, and it would be so delightful to travel. How unfortunate that our dearest one should have fallen ill with this horrid Roman fever just at this moment! but it is no use looking so

serious, Herbert; here we *must* wait till she is well;" and she put her tiny hand before his mouth to stop all remonstrance on the subject.

Agnes' resolution was taken. The next morning, when Mary came, she found her mistress up and dressed. She was better, she said, and would go into her studio. She had not strength to go into Imogene's room yet.

Imogene came to her. She was delighted at this step in recovery. Agnes had schooled herself; she was calm and gentle as ever. She asked when Herbert was coming, and begged Imogene to let him see her for a few minutes alone. When he came, she spoke urgently to him. She said she was better—well, in fact, and that the only thing which would complete her cure was their marriage: "If it can be solemnized without drawing attention to you here, let it be immediately; if it is better to wait till you get to Marseilles, you must go at once."

"And you?"

"I remain here." Her lips slightly quivered.

"I cannot leave Rome, do not ask me, dear Herbert. Mary shall accompany Imogene, and so will aunt May; but you will not ask me to leave Rome yet——" Her voice broke, and Herbert turned away.

"Here," continued Agnes, with her uncomplaining, pathetic voice, "the track of my life is all laid down, and I can continue mechanically in the same path I have trod hitherto. I have no strength left to enter another course of life, but there is congenial work in this for me. And I am still here where he was with us. Aunt May will manage all."

Herbert saw her mind was made up, and yielded; but the difficulty was in persuading Imogene. A life separate from Agnes did not seem to enter her conception of the possible. But with Herbert, aunt May, and Agnes herself against her, she was forced with many tears to yield. On examining Wentworth's papers, all was found in order. The estate reverted to Marmaduke; but a provision was made for both sisters. When Agnes had been told of this,

she had turned paler, and large tears rolled slowly down her cheek, but she was silent. The next day, however, she told aunt May that that money was Imogene's; she would not touch it. She only exacted a promise from Herbert, that half of it should be yearly made use of for the cause which Wentworth had so much at heart—the regeneration of Italy.

A month after Wentworth's death, the sisters parted. It was a heart-breaking separation. Imogene fainted in her sister's arms, and was borne in that condition to the carriage which awaited her.

Mary pressed her mistress in her arms, and sobbed like a child. She obeyed her wish to accompany Imogene, but in her heart was registered a vow of returning to Agnes as soon as she could. Aunt May was the least affected of them all. If anything could have called forth surprise in the almost deadened and stunned state of Agnes' mind, it would have been the gentle, calm smile with which aunt May parted from her. They all left, and Agnes was alone.

A month from the date of this parting, as Agnes returned from making some sketches in the Campagna, the Italian servant who opened the door looked radiantly at her, and then flew to the studio door. In the studio was aunt May.

"My dearest," said aunt May, while her eyes swam in tears, "do not reject me; please God, while I live, you and I shall never part. Imogene is well and happy, and at the Grange."

Agnes was no longer alone.

CHAPTER XIII.

ACCORDING to the old Rabbinical legend, God's kiss freed the parting soul of Moses. Is there not on this earth a love which in its power has a shadow of this effect?—a love which so consummates a life, that Fate puts its seal on it at once. Some may consider that Wentworth's death at that crowning moment—love shared, acknowledged, perfected—was an unspeakable blessing.

Agnes lived, but Wentworth himself was not more dead to existence in its ordinary sense. Her life was a *scala santa*. In memory of her great bereavement, but as pledge of her entire resignation, her days were days of prayer and duty. At any moment she might have met her beloved face to face unshrinkingly.

"Thrice blest are lives whose faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure ;
What souls possess themselves so pure ?
Or is there blessedness like theirs ?"

But a better idea can be given of Agnes, by giving some extracts of a letter from aunt May to her friend Marmaduke, than by a mere narrative:—

"You tell me, my dear Marmaduke, that my letters satisfy neither Herbert nor Imogene. That, numerous as they have been, they are so brief, that they are more like bulletins of Agnes' health than letters ; and that in those of Agnes to her sister, they only hear details of her occupations, minute inquiries about Imogene, but nothing as to her own state.

"It is difficult to write to Herbert and Imogene when such a reserve has to be maintained on the subject which fills all Agnes' thoughts. When that mystery is revealed, when Imogene's child is born, and she herself is quite recovered, Herbert intends telling her the truth, and then there will be nothing unsatisfactory in our correspondence.

“For more than six months Agnes continued in a state between life and death. The separation from Imogene and the consequent cessation of all motive to exertion, produced a lethargy, from which I thought she would never be roused. Not till Mary’s return did I see any improvement, but she is now, I thank God, better. A great grief makes the strongest mind childlike. As a weaned babe cries for the breast, so do the instincts of the heart in sorrow yearn for the mother-love. Mary’s faithful, simple devotion has something of this element in it. She has known Agnes from a baby, and Agnes does not fear resting her burdened heart on Mary, any more than when as a child she clung to her bosom. With me she is involuntarily more self-controlled. She feels herself in some measure bound to take care of me. It is all too natural for me to do anything but rejoice at Mary’s return. Besides, Mary was the last person who saw Godfrey, and this gives her an indefinable claim also. Agnes never avoids speaking of him, but when she does do so, it is with a shrinking and quiver-

ing, as if a fresh wound was suddenly laid open. By day she has lost little of that sweet, serene look which was habitual to her, though perhaps it is yet more refined and exalted; but once, when she was very ill indeed, I sat by her bedside all night, and as towards morning she fell asleep, I could see the uncontrolled expression of her face. It gave me the measure of her love for Godfrey. Such an intense look of grief I have never seen. When she woke, and the features again obeyed the will, the patience in them almost broke my heart. She is very assiduous in her studio, and takes long walks daily. Her careful tenderness for me never fails.

“Poor little Giacinto is dead. He had a brain-fever after that night, and raved about Agnes. When he recovered he had lost all his beauty, and apparently his intelligence, and moped about silently. His father had disappeared, and his mother, finding him no longer available as a model, has suffered want, and the child also. On him it has told—told fatally. His mother alter-

nately petted and abused him; but, as he did not ask for Agnes, never came near us, till one morning about a month ago. She was in a passion of grief. Her boy was dying, she said. She threw herself on her knees to Agnes, as to Notre Dame de Bon Secours. A torrent of remorse, regret, petitions for forgiveness, and promises of amendment fell from her lips. 'Come; only come!' she reiterated. Agnes rose with a flushed face and put on her bonnet. How I repined at my helplessness, not being able to accompany her, but Mary was ready in a moment, and, without her mistress being aware of it, followed her, and was present all the time. She told me what passed, just as I tell you.

"Giacinto was on his bed almost insensible. His little hands mechanically, as it seemed, played with the sheets; his eyes were closed. He was frightfully emaciated. The moment Agnes crossed the threshold, round which were grouped a number of women crying and telling their rosaries, he opened his eyes. Though dim and glazed, they were still soft and beautiful.

He recognized Agnes at once, made a violent effort, and as she came close to the bed, threw himself into her arms. They thought he was dead, for he remained motionless and all but breathless for several seconds. At length he tried to raise himself and looked at her.

“‘Are you angry with me, signora?’

“‘No.’

“‘I would have died for him, but they made me call him.’

“‘Hush, my child.’

“‘It has not killed you, but it has killed me.’

“‘Giacinto, why did not your mother come for me?’

“‘She was afraid. Do you forgive me, do you forgive them?’

“Agnes stooped and kissed him. There was a pause. Again the child spoke, but in a yet fainter voice.

“‘You will not forget me, I love you so dearly.’

“‘Never?’

“‘Have you still the palm I gave you?’

“‘Yes!’ Agnes shuddered a little. The child looked at her, and kissed her white lips.

“‘Keep it for my sake.’

“ Agnes bent her head in silence.

“ The child laid down his head on her shoulder. When his mother tried to raise him, he was dead. Agnes was ill several weeks after she returned home. She went about as usual in the daytime, but Mary says she is sure that for weeks she had little, if any, sleep, for whenever she went into her room in the morning, her eyes were wide open and fixed on that dreadful stain on the ground.

“ But this has passed away now. Now, I think her life is what it will be till the end comes. You say that Herbert is often very sad, and that he has written to you that even Imogene cannot always cheer him. I am sure that living at the Grange must be a trial in some things to him, but it is pleasant to Agnes to know that Imogene is in her own old home. In Herbert’s letter he asks, ‘Why should Agnes have endured such sufferings—she who deserved such happiness?’

Deserved ! what an idle word that is ! as if happiness was something external, doled out to us, as prizes are given to the diligent in a school. Believe me, it is a seed which God has planted in the hearts of all, whatever may be our outward circumstances, in order that we may cultivate it till it grows into a beautiful plant, endowed with a divine vitality, which no earthly storms can mar, no earthly hands uproot, for it is to flower in heaven. Agnes is not unhappy ; she mourns her irreparable loss, and will mourn it all her life, but with her ‘tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.’ You, too, dear Marmaduke, say to me that you wonder that a life so useless as yours was not taken and Godfrey’s spared. ‘With God there is no first or last.’ Besides this, there is strict logic in life. Who can abstract the quality of heat from fire ? Then how can the circumstances amid which we are, or which are the inevitable sequence of what we have done, be prevented from acting according to their own inevitable laws ? Be our merits more or less, be our motives justi-

fiable or not, how can we escape? Involved as we are in other lives, what confusion there would be if it were not so. It seems to me that Christ himself has answered this kind of questioning. The Tower of Siloam falls on the saint as on the sinner. One thing more: let your old friend ask you, why should your life be useless? I can well imagine that, having had that one glimpse of Imogene which you tell me you have had, the recollections of the past have been revived, and are very burdensome; but there is a wide margin for a better future in your life. Where to acquiesce, and where to resist trials, is the enigma we must all solve.

“But I must end. You will say, like Laura, I am very prosy and didactic. Let me return to Agnes. You and Herbert must give up all hope that she will leave Rome. She says her life-roots are under the tomb at Monte Testamo. She cannot leave it. She anticipates with the sincerest pleasure seeing Herbert and Imogene, and rejoices at the idea of their child. She is incessantly occupied, and takes as much interest as she ever did in

art, progress, and poetry ; but those who know her, as I do, see the heart uplifted to Heaven, through all. Do you remember the ‘Christ raising the Dead’ by Razzi, in Siena?—the dead from all time: Adam, Eve—all who had lived, or rather, all who had died, before His death gave to all Life. How divinely beautiful is that figure of Eve! What tender, gracious, womanly loveliness! But the sentiment of the whole is in those upraised and prayerful hands, emerging from that dark grave, and imploring life from the Saviour. You see nothing but the hands; but what wonderful appeal is in them, what supplicating entreaty is expressed by them! Is not this the type of many a life,—held out to God, to be made free?”

THE END.

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